



# Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS

MONDAY — 22 Nov 2021



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## Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	<b>11/22 Greece: new restrictions as deaths mount</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/restrictions-greece-pandemic-deaths-mount-81324880">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/restrictions-greece-pandemic-deaths-mount-81324880</a>
GIST	<p>ATHENS, Greece -- Greece on Monday introduced a wide range of new restrictions aimed at curbing a COVID-19 infection spike that has pushed the rate of death to nearly double the European Union average.</p> <p>A government order went into effect through Dec. 6, mandating masks at all workplaces, staggering opening hours in the public and private sector, and allowing access for adults to indoor recreation and entertainment areas only to those carrying a certificate of vaccination or recent recovery.</p> <p>The restricted spaces include indoor areas at bars, restaurants, movie theaters and museums.</p> <p>Additional capacity limits and entry restrictions were also imposed at courts and places of worship.</p> <p>About a third of the country's population and a quarter of adults remain unvaccinated and deaths have risen rapidly since late October to reach the highest level in six months.</p> <p>The measures were imposed after ICU occupancy for COVID-19 treatment exceeded 90%.</p> <p>The government has ruled out a return to a general lockdown but Health Minister Thanos Plevris said the current restrictions would be re-assessed in two weeks.</p> <p>"It is our unvaccinated fellow citizens who are getting very sick, are being admitted to ICU wards, and are dying," he told private Antenna television.</p> <p>"The vaccinated do not require the same level of protection."</p> <p>A senior prosecutor, meanwhile, has filed criminal and misdemeanor charges against more than 40 people in central Greece allegedly involved in an operation selling vaccination certificates to people who have not received the shot.</p> <p>It was the first time the serious criminal charges of participation in a criminal organization and money laundering were imposed in a vaccination fraud case in Greece.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/22 Virus cases tick upward once more</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/22/us/us-covid-cases-rising-thanksgiving.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/22/us/us-covid-cases-rising-thanksgiving.html</a>
GIST	CHICAGO — A month ago, new coronavirus cases in the United States were ticking steadily downward and the worst of a miserable summer surge fueled by the Delta variant appeared to be over. But as

Americans travel this week to meet far-flung relatives for Thanksgiving dinner, new virus cases are rising once more, especially in the Upper Midwest and Northeast.

Federal medical teams have been dispatched to [Minnesota](#) to help at overwhelmed hospitals. [Michigan](#) is enduring its worst case surge yet, with daily caseloads doubling since the start of November. Even New England, where vaccination rates are high, is struggling, with [Vermont](#), [Maine](#) and [New Hampshire](#) trying to contain major outbreaks.

Nationally, case levels remain well below those seen in early September, when summer infections peaked, and are below those seen last Thanksgiving. But conditions are worsening rapidly, and this will not be the post-pandemic Thanksgiving that Americans had hoped for. More than 90,000 cases are being reported each day, comparable to early August, and more than 30 states are seeing sustained upticks in infections. In the hardest-hit places, hospitalizations are already climbing.

“This thing is no longer just throwing curveballs at us — it’s throwing 210 mile an hour curveballs at us,” said Michael Osterholm, an epidemiologist at the University of Minnesota. He said that the virus had repeatedly defied predictions and continues to do so.

The new rise in cases comes at a complicated moment. Last Thanksgiving, before vaccines were available, federal and local officials had firmly urged Americans to forgo holiday gatherings. But in sharp contrast, public health officials, [including Dr. Anthony S. Fauci](#), the nation’s leading infectious-disease expert, have mostly suggested this year that vaccinated people could gather in relative safety.

In interviews across the country, Americans said they were not sure what to think.

Jess Helle-Morrissey, 43, a therapist who lives in St. Paul, Minn, said she has decided to host a dinner, though case rates in her state are among the country’s worst. About 4,200 cases are emerging every day and hospitalizations are soaring in Minnesota.

“They are diligent maskers and don’t take any extra risks,” she said of her guests. “Everyone who is coming, I keep saying, is, you know, vaxxed to the max.”

In important ways, the country is in better shape than during previous upticks. Doctors have learned more about how to treat the virus and experts are hopeful that [antiviral pills](#) will soon be approved. Most crucially, many Americans have been vaccinated. The availability of those shots — including the recent approval of booster doses for all adults — has raised confidence for many who said they planned to proceed with holiday celebrations.

But about 50,000 coronavirus patients are hospitalized nationwide, and tens of millions of Americans have declined to be vaccinated. The course of the virus in Europe, where [Austria](#) is entering a lockdown and some areas of [Germany](#) have shut down Christmas markets, has raised fears about just how high case numbers might rise in the United States.

“The last thing I want is what Austria is doing,” said Dr. Allison Arwady, the public health commissioner in Chicago, where cases have started to rise. “I really, really don’t want to go there.”

In Austria, about 66 percent of the population has been fully vaccinated against the virus. In the United States, about 59 percent of the population has been.

Still, millions of Americans were forging ahead with holiday plans. Federal officials expected Thanksgiving air travel to approach prepandemic levels. And plenty of people who hit the road this year will be unvaccinated, unmasked and largely unworried about Covid-19.

Many experts said the wide availability of vaccines, now authorized for everyone 5 and older, as well as at-home testing, made it possible for vaccinated people to host a relatively safe, though not fully risk-free, gathering.

Dr. Arwady said she planned to spend the holiday with extended family members, all of whom are vaccinated except young children who are not eligible. While reports of new cases in [Illinois](#) have increased 62 percent in the last two weeks, she said she wanted vaccinated people to feel confident going about their life and to enjoy Thanksgiving.

“Is there the potential for some spread? Of course there is,” said Dr. Arwady, who suggested that unvaccinated adults consider staying home. “Are the people who are vaccinated, even if they haven’t gotten a booster, likely to end up in the hospital or die? They’re really not.”

Dr. Osterholm said he worried about breakthrough cases in vaccinated people who did not have booster shots and about the potential for future mutations of the virus. Still, he too said he would gather for the holiday with vaccinated family members who live nearby.

Many others who were interviewed, including in states with some of the highest infection rates, voiced exhaustion and frustration that the virus was even a consideration this holiday season, 20 months into the pandemic.

In New Mexico, which is averaging 1,400 cases a day, Bernice Medina, 37, a food truck operator, said she was uneasy when she gathered with her large family for the holidays last year but felt safer now because she was vaccinated. In Michigan, home to nearly one of every 10 new coronavirus cases nationwide, Dustin Johnston, 40, a photographer, said the vaccines made him confident enough to gather locally with older relatives.

“The vaccination, I think, changes everything,” said Mr. Johnston, whose state has the country’s highest rate of recent cases.

Officials who once urged caution were now deferring to individuals to make their own decisions.

“It’s really hard to tell people to stay away from their families,” said Mayor Katie Rosenberg of Wausau, Wis., where cases have surged to their highest levels since late 2020. “I can’t anymore.”

Dr. Rebecca Smith, an epidemiologist at the University of Illinois, said she planned to travel by vehicle with her children to see family but would get tested before and after.

“People want to get back to normal and we understand that — and there are ways to do that safely,” she said.

Still, Dr. Smith said she expected the outbreak in Illinois to continue to worsen as the virus rips across Midwestern and Northeastern states that largely avoided the worst of the summer surge. In the last two weeks, reports of new cases have increased by more than 40 percent in [Pennsylvania](#), by more than 80 percent in [Massachusetts](#) and by 70 percent in [Indiana](#).

Infection levels are also persistently high across much of the West, including in [Arizona](#) and [New Mexico](#), where hospitalizations are rising, and in [Alaska](#) and [Wyoming](#), which have started to improve after enduring major outbreaks. But case rates in California are relatively low, as they also are in the South, the region hit hardest over the summer.

Ahead of Thanksgiving 2020, the country was reporting 175,000 new infections a day and was midway through its worst case surge of the pandemic. Vaccines were still weeks away from being authorized, many schools were closed and at-home rapid tests were rare. But even as scientists warned that Covid-19 was unlikely to completely vanish, there was widespread optimism back then that vaccines could make the virus an afterthought in daily life.

“It was wicked bad last year during the holidays,” said Kirk Burrows, 26, a paramedic in Unity, Maine, who said he planned to stay home for another Thanksgiving. “I think it’s going to be worse this year.”

Mr. Burrows, who described long ambulance rides with coronavirus patients being transferred to hospitals hours away, said he thought many people had let their guard down as the pandemic persisted. [Maine](#) is routinely reporting more than 700 new cases a day, its most since the pandemic started, and hospitalizations have reached record levels.

“I think a lot of people are fed up,” Mr. Burrows said. “They got that glimmer of hope in June and July, and they’re trucking right on through. Now everyone’s used to it.”

Dr. James Volk, a vice president for Sanford Health in Fargo, N.D., where coronavirus hospitalizations have been persistently high, said he felt that fewer people were seeking medical advice about how to approach the holidays this year.

“I just think that people in general here have kind of moved on from that,” said Dr. Volk, who said he planned to stay home for Thanksgiving because of concerns about the virus.

Some authorities have called for modifications to holiday traditions.

Michigan health officials issued a holiday mask advisory on Friday — recommending that people wear a mask at indoor gatherings regardless of their vaccination status — to blunt both Covid-19 and a [rising flu outbreak](#). Vermont officials suggested that unvaccinated children wear a mask if celebrating with their grandparents. And in New York, Gov. Kathy Hochul, while acknowledging that “no one wants to hear this again,” suggested that people avoid indoor spaces and large gatherings to curb transmission.

“We all went through this anxiety a year ago,” said Ms. Hochul, a Democrat, whose state has seen new cases increase more than 50 percent in the last two weeks. “We thought that was the last time. We declared, ‘By this time next year, I’m sure we’ll be fine. We’ll have that vaccine.’ And because there are still holdouts, we cannot declare that it’s going to be completely safe.”

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HEADLINE	11/21 Fewer Christmas trees, higher prices
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/tech/science/environment/christmas-tree-supply-may-be-limited-thanks-to-summer-heat-wave/281-b815231b-ab4e-453c-8dea-0dd6a00c496f">https://www.king5.com/article/tech/science/environment/christmas-tree-supply-may-be-limited-thanks-to-summer-heat-wave/281-b815231b-ab4e-453c-8dea-0dd6a00c496f</a>
GIST	<p>We all know why it's good to be the early bird, but with Thanksgiving turkeys still defrosting it seems early to be thinking about a real Christmas tree. However, those in the industry warn supply may be tighter than ever this year.</p> <p><a href="#">Last summer's heat wave</a> is coming back to haunt us as tree shoppers discover how some tree farms were impacted. At <a href="#">Trinity Tree Farm</a> in Issaquah, the mature trees did better than new plantings.</p> <p>“I would say half of what we planted last year is not going to survive,” Geoff Wiley said.</p> <p>It can take a decade for a tree to be ready depending on the variety. Wiley said this damage may mean more shortages in future years.</p> <p>Though many of their mature trees made it through the heat wave without major damage, Wiley said he’s heard of other farms that weren’t so lucky.</p> <p>“It’s horrible to watch it because you see it happening and then you can’t do anything to control it and you have to wait and see how bad the damage is going to turn out to be,” Wiley said.</p> <p>Trinity will replant the young trees they lost but other farms that are dealing with mature tree damage might find it harder.</p> <p>Wiley said an increase in demand has also put pressure on their industry. In recent years they’d like to stay open longer but usually run out of trees they can sell.</p>



"We just get swamped with so many people and so the trees go faster and faster," Wiley said.

[The American Christmas Tree Association reports](#) supply chain issues and weather problems will mean a tighter supply so they're recommending that everyone who is hoping for a real tree buy earlier and expect to pay more this year.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/22 Federal vaccine mandate takes effect</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.npr.org/2021/11/22/1057484060/today-is-the-deadline-for-federal-workers-to-be-vaccinated">https://www.npr.org/2021/11/22/1057484060/today-is-the-deadline-for-federal-workers-to-be-vaccinated</a>
GIST	<p>Monday marks the deadline for millions of federal employees to provide proof that they've been vaccinated against COVID-19. The mandate was imposed by President Biden in an executive order signed back in September.</p> <p>Federal workers will have all day today to turn in their proof of vaccination. White House press secretary Jen Psaki said experience with other similar mandates in the private sector indicates there could be a last minute rush to meet the requirements and submit paperwork.</p> <p>"We don't see it as a cliff," said Psaki in Friday's briefing.</p> <p>For months the White House resisted vaccine mandates out of concern over backlash, but with the delta variant causing a surge in cases and the pace of vaccinations plateauing, Biden signed orders requiring all civilian federal workers and employees of federal contractors to provide proof of vaccination. A similar requirement was instituted for members of the military and people working in nursing homes, hospitals and doctor's offices.</p> <p>Although the CDC opened up booster shots to all adults on Friday, for now, the requirement is just for a single dose of the J&amp;J vaccine or two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines. That could change if the CDC updates its definition of fully vaccinated to include boosters.</p> <p>As for the share of federal workers who have already gotten vaccinated, Psaki said the White House will be crunching the numbers throughout the day. But she insisted they aren't expecting disruptions caused by people choosing not to be vaccinated.</p> <p>"No, we do not anticipate facing any governmental operational disruptions due to this requirement," said Psaki. "And in fact the requirement will avoid disruptions in our view because vaccinations help avoid COVID."</p> <p>Heading into a busy travel week, Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said his agency is well on its way to a nearly fully vaccinated workforce.</p> <p>"We've seen numbers approaching 99% of people have gotten in their information, per the requirements," Buttigieg said Sunday on NBC's Meet the Press. "Either they're...vaccinated, or they're in the process of it, or they've put in a request for an exemption."</p> <p>He added that he expected similar numbers "across the board." The White House is signaling the rate of vaccine uptake among the federal workforce has exceeded expectations. And although the deadline is Monday, workers won't be pulled off their posts immediately.</p> <p>"It's part of a process to make sure that everyone in the federal workforce is safe," said Buttigieg.</p> <p>The largest federal employee union AFGE requested earlier this month that the Biden administration align the vaccination deadline for federal workers with the January deadline for employees of federal contractors, arguing it would be bad for morale for employees to face disciplinary action over the holidays. The White House didn't move either deadline.</p>

	<p>But in congressional testimony, AFGE president Everett Kelley pointed to avoiding a government shutdown as "the single most important thing Congress can do to ensure a turbulence-free season."</p> <p>Government funding is set to run out Dec. 3 unless Congress passes another funding measure.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Protesters march through downtown Seattle</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/marchers-rally-seattle-participate-global-day-protest/5L3XYTKPIZDQT15KSV2NWWQA5U/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/marchers-rally-seattle-participate-global-day-protest/5L3XYTKPIZDQT15KSV2NWWQA5U/</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Numerous people from around the Puget Sound area participated in a large protest in downtown Seattle on Sunday.</p> <p>The protest was part of a worldwide demonstration in what's being called a Global Day of Protest.</p> <p>They were peaceful protesting after the United States on Friday <a href="#">imposed economic sanctions</a> on the military and ruling party of Eritrea over their role in Ethiopia's yearlong war, and warned it would sanction Ethiopia's government and rival Tigray forces if there is not "meaningful progress" toward a cease-fire and talks.</p> <p>A Treasury Department statement cited the "continued role" the Eritreans play in the war that has killed thousands and displaced millions. Ethiopia's government allowed Eritrean soldiers to enter Ethiopia's Tigray region, where witnesses have accused them of <a href="#">some of the war's worst abuses</a>, but then denied the soldiers were there for months.</p> <p>The U.S. statement noted "numerous reports of looting, sexual assault, killing civilians, and blocking humanitarian aid" by Eritrean forces.</p> <p>Sunday's demonstration took place in 27 cities across the world.</p> <p>Protesters in Seattle marched toward the federal building downtown.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/22 China tightens Belt and Road in Africa</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/african-nations-mend-make-do-china-tightens-belt-road-2021-11-22/">https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/african-nations-mend-make-do-china-tightens-belt-road-2021-11-22/</a>
GIST	<p>NAIROBI, Nov 22 (Reuters) - Deep in Kenya's Great Rift Valley, members of the National Youth Service tirelessly swing machetes to clear dense shrubs obscuring railway tracks more than a century old.</p> <p>It's a distinctly low-tech phase for China's Belt and Road drive in Africa to create the trade highways of the future.</p> <p>There's not enough money left to complete the new 1,000-km super-fast rail link from the port of Mombasa to Uganda. It ends abruptly in the countryside, 468 km short of the border, and now Kenya is resorting to finishing the route by revamping the 19th-century colonial British-built tracks that once passed that way.</p> <p>China has lent African countries hundreds of billions of dollars as part of President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which envisaged Chinese institutions financing the bulk of the infrastructure in mainly developing nations. Yet the credit has dried up in recent years.</p> <p>On top of the damage wrought to both China and its creditors by COVID-19, analysts and academics attribute the slowdown to factors such as a waning appetite in Beijing for large foreign investments, a commodity price crash that has complicated African debt servicing, plus some borrowers' reluctance to enter lending deals backed by their natural resources.</p>

"We are not in the go-go period anymore," Adam Tooze, a Columbia University historian, said about China's overseas investment projects. "There is definitely a rebalancing from the China side," said Tooze, whose new book Shutdown examines how COVID-19 affected the world economy, adding that Beijing's current account surplus was "dwindling somewhat".

Chinese investments in the 138 countries targeted by BRI slid 54% from 2019 to \$47 billion last year, the lowest amount since the BRI was unveiled in 2013, according to Green BRI, a China-based think-tank that focuses on analysing the initiative.

In Africa, home to 40 of those BRI nations, Chinese bank financing for infrastructure projects fell from \$11 billion in 2017 to \$3.3 billion in 2020, according to a report by international law firm Baker McKenzie.

This is a blow for governments who were anticipating securing Chinese loans to build highways and rail lines linking landlocked countries to sea ports and trade routes to Asia and Europe. The continent is facing an estimated annual infrastructure investment deficit of around \$100 billion, according to the African Development Bank.

"The pandemic has actually made things worse. Those numbers will go up," said Akinwumi Adesina, the president of the bank, citing the need for additional infrastructure to support health services.

Hold-ups have hit some other BRI projects across the continent, such as a \$3 billion Nigerian rail project and a \$450 million highway in Cameroon.

China's ministry of foreign affairs did not respond to a request for comment.

Beijing officials have said that the two sides have a mutually beneficial and cooperative relationship and that lending is done openly and transparently.

"When providing interest-free loans and concessional loans, we fully consider the debt situation and repayment capacity of the recipient countries in Africa, and work in accordance with the law," Zhou Liujun, vice chairman of China International Development Cooperation Agency told reporters in late October.

Another Chinese official, who declined to be named as they are not authorised to speak to the media, said Beijing always intended to implement BRI gradually to manage debt default risks by countries or projects.

#### 'RAILWAY WILL BE BUILT'

Officials in Kenya said its rail route were long-term projects that would be seen through over time, without giving any specific timeframe. The COVID-19 has presented the world with unforeseen and unprecedented challenges, they added.

"Eventually, this standard gauge railway will still be complete because it is part of what we call the Belt and Road Initiative," said James Macharia, Kenya's transport minister.

The government has already spent about \$5 billion on its new rail link, and can't currently afford the additional \$3.7 billion needed to finish it. The last station hooked up is only accessible by dirt roads.

Hence engineers in the Rift Valley are no longer building new infrastructure, but rather shoring up colonial-era viaducts and bridges in an operation that the government estimates will cost about 10 billion shillings (\$91 million).

There are knock-on effects and, over the border in Uganda, construction on a modern railway line has been delayed because it's supposed to link to the Kenyan one.



That has been one factor in the hold-up in a \$2.2 billion loan from the Export-Import Bank of China (Exim Bank), David Mugabe, spokesperson for Uganda's Standard Gauge Railway project, told Reuters.

In Nigeria, the government turned to London-headquartered Standard Chartered Bank (STAN.L) this year to finance the \$3 billion railway project initially slated to receive Chinese backing. Standard Chartered declined to comment on the deal, citing confidentiality agreements.

In Cameroon, the \$450 million highway linking the capital Yaounde and the economic hub of Douala, whose funding was secured from China's Exim Bank in 2012, stalled in 2019 as the bank stopped disbursing further tranches of the loan.

Exim Bank did not respond to a request for comment on its loans to Uganda and Cameroon.

## MALAYSIA TO BOLIVIA

Zhou Yuyuan, Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for West Asian and African Studies at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, said the COVID-19 crisis had strained Chinese lending institutions and African finances alike.

In future, he added, Beijing was likely to encourage more corporate Chinese investment in the continent, to fill the role of state-backed financing. "Once the pandemic is over, Africa's economy is likely to recover," he said. "That could drive China's corporate investment."

The pandemic has added to the obstacles facing President Xi's self-described "project of the century". After peaking at \$125.25 billion in 2015, Chinese investments into BRI nations have dropped every year, apart from 2018, when they edged up 6.7%, the Green BRI data showed.

In 2018, Pakistan balked at the cost and the financing terms of building a railway. The previous year, there were signs of growing problems for BRI, after China's push in Sri Lanka sparked protests.

AidData, a research lab at the College of William and Mary in the United States, said in a study at the end of September that \$11.58 billion in projects in Malaysia had been cancelled over 2013-2021, with nearly \$1.5 billion cancelled in Kazakhstan and more than a \$1 billion in Bolivia.

"A growing number of policymakers in low and middle-income countries are mothballing high-profile BRI projects because of overpricing, corruption and debt sustainability concerns," said Brad Parks, one of the study's authors.

China's foreign ministry said in response to the AidData report that "not all debts are unsustainable", adding that since its launch the BRI had "consistently upheld principles of shared consultation, shared contributions and shared benefits".

## 'RESOURCES ARE FINITE'

A key problem is debt sustainability.

Copper producer Zambia became Africa's first pandemic-era sovereign default last year after failing to keep up with payments on more than \$12 billion of international debt, for example. A recent study suggested more than half of that burden is owed to Chinese public and private lenders. [read more](#)

In late 2018, Beijing agreed to restructure billions of dollars in debt owed by Ethiopia.

Some African governments are also growing more reluctant to take out loans backed commodities such as oil and metals.

	<p>"We can't mortgage our oil," Uganda's works and transport minister Katumba Wamala told Reuters, confirming the country had refused to pledge untapped oil in fields in the west to secure the railway loan.</p> <p>The finance squeeze means African governments must make more strategic investment decisions in terms of debt sustainability, said Yvette Babb, a Netherlands-based fixed income portfolio manager at William Blair.</p> <p>"There is no infinite amount of capital," she said.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>11/22 China: not seek dominance SE Asia</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/business-asia-beijing-xi-jinping-china-21e8b6187dd209b1d8ad428739602671">https://apnews.com/article/business-asia-beijing-xi-jinping-china-21e8b6187dd209b1d8ad428739602671</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>BEIJING (AP) — Chinese leader Xi Jinping on Monday said his country will not seek dominance over Southeast Asia or bully its smaller neighbors, amid ongoing friction over the South China Sea.</p> <p>Xi made the remarks during a virtual conference with the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, held to mark the 30th anniversary of relations between China and the grouping.</p> <p>Two diplomats said ASEAN member Myanmar was not represented at Monday's meeting after its military-installed government refused to allow an ASEAN envoy to meet with ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi and other arrested politicians. Military ruler Gen. Min Aung Hlaing was also barred from representing his country at the last ASEAN summit.</p> <p>China has repeatedly sought to overcome concerns about its rising power and influence in the region, particularly its claim to virtually the entire South China Sea that overlaps the claims of ASEAN members Malaysia, Vietnam, Brunei and the Philippines.</p> <p>"China resolutely opposes hegemonism and power politics, wishes to maintain friendly relations with its neighbors and jointly nurture lasting peace in the region and absolutely will not seek hegemony or even less, bully the small," Xi said, according to the official Xinhua News Agency.</p> <p>Xi's remarks came days after Chinese coast guard ships blocked and sprayed a powerful stream of water at two Philippine boats carrying supplies to troops at a disputed South China Sea shoal and forced them to turn back.</p> <p>Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte highlighted the incident in his remarks at the conference, referring to the shoal by its Philippine name.</p> <p>"We abhor the recent event in the Ayungin Shoal and view with grave concern other similar developments. This does not speak well of the relations between our nations and our partnership," Duterte said, according to a statement from his office.</p> <p>Duterte also called on China to respect the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea which establishes maritime entitlements and sovereign rights over maritime zones, along with a 2016 Hague arbitration ruling that mostly invalidated China's South China Sea claims. China has refused to recognize the ruling.</p> <p>"We must fully utilize these legal tools to ensure that the South China Sea remains a sea of peace, stability and prosperity," Duterte said.</p> <p>On Monday, the Philippines redeployed the two supply boats to provide food to the marines based at Second Thomas Shoal aboard a World War II-era warship which it deliberately ran aground in 1999 in a move to fortify the country's claim. Chinese vessels have surrounded the shoal and demanded the Philippines tow away the ship, the BRP Sierra Madre.</p>

At a daily briefing Monday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian reasserted China's position rejecting the 2016 arbitration ruling and claiming that its "territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in the South China Sea are backed by sufficient historical and legal basis."

"Any attempt to challenge China's sovereignty and interests will not succeed," Zhao told reporters. "At present, the situation in relevant waters in the South China Sea are generally calm, and China and the Philippines are maintaining close communication."

Malaysian Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob also raised the sea in his speech at the conference, saying, "As a claimant state, Malaysia firmly views that matters relating to the South China Sea must be resolved peacefully and constructively in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law."

"Malaysia calls on all countries to remain committed towards maintaining the South China Sea as a sea of peace, stability and trade," his office quoted him as saying. "To this end, all parties should exercise self-restraint and avoid actions that may be deemed provocative, which could further complicate the situation and escalate tensions in the area."

China has sought to strengthen its presence in the waterway, home to crucial shipping routes, fish stocks and undersea oil and gas deposits, by building airstrips and other features on islands created by piling sand and concrete atop coral reefs.

China's powerful navy, coast guard and maritime militia have also sought to block moves by regional countries to exploit resources within their exclusive economic zones, and it strongly objects to operations by the U.S. and other foreign militaries in the area. China and ASEAN have for years been negotiating a code of conduct for handling matters in the South China Sea but those talks have made little progress of late.

China remains a crucial market for Southeast Asian countries as well as a source of investment, and ASEAN has sought to avoid conflict with Beijing. China also has strong ties with ASEAN members Cambodia and Laos and has refrained from criticizing Myanmar, where security forces are estimated to have killed almost 1,200 civilians since overthrowing Suu Kyi's elected government in February. The government has claimed a lower death toll.

China had wished that all 10 ASEAN members join Monday's meeting, but Brunei, which currently holds the group's rotating chairmanship, objected to Myanmar's presence, according to two diplomats who spoke on condition of anonymity.

A photo of the video meeting showed just an empty box with the Myanmar and ASEAN flags.

In other comments, Xi said peace was the "greatest common interest" of all sides and China would exert its utmost to avoid conflict.

"We must be the constructors and protectors of regional peace, insist on dialogue instead of confrontation, partnership and nonalignment, and join hands in dealing with various negative factors that threaten to undermine peace," Xi said.

"We must practice true multilateralism and insist on handling international and regional matters through negotiation," Xi said.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo emphasized the economic links that have made China ASEAN's biggest trading partner for the past 12 years.

Trade has grown from \$8.36 billion in 1991 to more than \$685.28 billion last year, Widodo said.

	Over the same period, two-way cumulative investment has also exceeded \$310 billion, making China the fourth largest source of foreign direct investment among all ASEAN dialogue partners, the Indonesian leader added.
	“Mutual trust can be realized if we all respect international law,” Widodo said.
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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Breakthrough cases strike older, vulnerable</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-breakthrough-hospitalizations-concentrated-among-most-vulnerable-11637499602">https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-breakthrough-hospitalizations-concentrated-among-most-vulnerable-11637499602</a>
GIST	<p>Breakthrough cases of Covid-19 are hitting older people and those with underlying health conditions particularly hard, according to a new review of data by The Wall Street Journal that sharpens the picture of who remains at risk despite vaccinations.</p> <p>State reporting is inconsistent but collectively shows there have been more than 1.89 million cases and at least 72,000 hospitalizations and 20,000 deaths among fully vaccinated people in the U.S. this year, the Journal found.</p> <p>State and federal data broadly show unvaccinated people are primarily driving pandemic numbers. Breakthrough infections, however, are making up a growing portion because of rising numbers of vaccinated people and waning immunity among people who got their shots early on, some states show.</p> <p>Spotty U.S. data have clouded the view of just how many fully vaccinated people are getting Covid-19, landing in hospitals and dying. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention doesn't publish a running tally on raw breakthrough numbers. The Journal reviewed medical-record data for a total of more than 21 million fully vaccinated people, and an array of state reports, to compile its analysis. In particular, people with diabetes, chronic lung disease, kidney disease and compromised immune systems were at risk of serious outcomes from breakthrough cases, the data show.</p> <p>Health agencies generally define fully vaccinated as two weeks beyond a second mRNA vaccine or a single <a href="#">Johnson &amp; Johnson</a> shot.</p> <p>Tracking breakthroughs is an important part of protecting vulnerable people as the nation shifts to managing <a href="#">Covid-19 for the long term</a>, according to public-health officials. The effort includes stepping up boosters and improving <a href="#">overall vaccine uptake</a>, public-health experts say.</p> <p>“You have to be humble in the face of Covid,” said Sharon Balter, director of the division of communicable disease control and prevention for Los Angeles County’s public-health department. Her agency reported in August that unvaccinated people were nearly five times more likely to get Covid-19 and about 29 times more likely to be hospitalized than fully vaccinated people.</p> <p>CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said Wednesday that emergency room visits by vaccinated people age 65 and older were increasing. “We want to reinforce the importance of people who are eligible getting boosted now,” Dr. Walensky said.</p> <p>These people are often vulnerable. Recent data from South Carolina show 79% of people hospitalized with breakthrough infections there had at least one existing health condition, such as diabetes. In the intensive-care unit, where hospitals treat the most severely ill patients, the percentage increased to 88%.</p> <p>At the Medical University of South Carolina, nearly all fully vaccinated Covid-19 patients in the ICU have weak immune systems from prior health problems, said Andrew Goodwin, the section chief of critical care. The rest are elderly, which can also compromise the body’s defense against illness.</p>

Truveta Inc., a firm that aggregates hospitals' medical data for research, found among 1.7 million fully vaccinated people that those with diabetes, chronic lung disease and chronic kidney disease were about twice as likely to be hospitalized for breakthrough cases as vaccinated people without these conditions.

The likelihood of having a breakthrough infection was still low, though confirmed infections were more common for people with these illnesses. About 1.5% of roughly 110,000 people with chronic kidney disease had one, for example. But Truveta found about a quarter of breakthrough patients with chronic kidney disease wound up hospitalized. The likelihood of hospitalizations for people with breakthrough cases but without underlying health problems was about 7.5%.

Breakthrough deaths are hitting older people the hardest, amplifying a well-worn pandemic pattern. Exclusive data the Journal reviewed from the Epic Health Research Network, which analyzes data from the medical-record software company Epic Systems Corp., shows about 80% of breakthrough deaths among the vaccinated are in people ages 65 and older. The data included records for 19.5 million fully vaccinated people. Among all Covid-19 deaths this year, that age group represents closer to 69%, according to the CDC.

The Epic Health Research Network data also point to more severe breakthrough cases in the most vulnerable patients, who were identified using a federal measure of social and economic factors. "This is magnifying underlying health disparities that we're seeing," said Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health researcher Thomas Tsai, co-author of a study that found the most-vulnerable communities had twice the odds of hospitals with ICUs near capacity than the least-vulnerable areas, using the same federal measure.

Data sets differ in how they count Covid-19 hospitalizations. Epic Health Research Network researchers included people with confirmed cases who were admitted to hospitals for Covid-19, while Truveta included Covid-19 positive people who might be hospitalized for other reasons.

The CDC's breakthrough data reflect samples of the population from multiple sources, such as one network that collects data from 250 acute-care hospitals across 14 states and another that uses Department of Veterans Affairs records. The agency's data show higher rates of cases, hospitalizations and deaths among the unvaccinated. Detailed reporting on breakthroughs by states is voluntary.

"CDC does not need to have data from all jurisdictions to be able to draw strong conclusions about disease trends," the agency said.

The Epic Health Research Network's cumulative data show about 1.2% of fully vaccinated people had a breakthrough case, similar to findings among states that publicize such data. The company also found a tipping point for breakthrough cases at about 20 to 22 weeks after people got their latest shot. Georgia found something similar while measuring the gap between when people became fully vaccinated and tested positive for Covid-19.

The findings seem to reflect factors including when vaccine effectiveness began to wane in many people and the rampant spread of the Delta variant in late summer, said Jackie Gerhart, a physician and vice president of clinical informatics at the Epic Health Research Network. Its data show breakthroughs climbed significantly [during the Delta surge](#).

State officials have stressed that unvaccinated people remain at higher risk. In Vermont, which leads the states with 72% of its population fully vaccinated, unvaccinated people have recently made up roughly 70% of new cases, Health Commissioner Mark Levine said in an interview this month.

Authorities are concerned that vaccinated people are making up a bigger piece of the pie, however, and are urging boosters. On Thursday, Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear noted that 16% of hospitalizations in that less-vaccinated state have been among fully vaccinated people since March 1. Last month the cumulative figure was 8.4%.

	"Look at how these numbers have changed," he said. "This is waning immunity."
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HEADLINE	<b>11/22 Austria enters nationwide lockdown</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/austria-enters-nationwide-lockdown-fight-soaring-cases-81322488">https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/austria-enters-nationwide-lockdown-fight-soaring-cases-81322488</a>
GIST	<p>VIENNA -- Austria went into a nationwide lockdown early Monday in a desperate effort to contain spiraling coronavirus infections.</p> <p>The lockdown in the Alpine nation comes as average daily deaths have tripled in recent weeks and some hospitals have warned that their intensive care units are reaching capacity. The lockdown will last at least 10 days but could extend to 20, officials said. People will be able to leave their homes only for specific reasons, including buying groceries, going to the doctor or exercising.</p> <p>Austrian Chancellor Alexander Schallenberg also announced last week that Austria will introduce a vaccine mandate as of Feb. 1. The details of how the mandate will work aren't yet clear, but the government has said that people who do not adhere to the mandate will face fines.</p> <p>Schallenberg apologized to all vaccinated people on Friday, saying it wasn't fair that they had to suffer under the renewed lockdown restrictions. Earlier, Austria had tried out a lockdown just for unvaccinated people but it did not slow infections enough.</p> <p>"I'm sorry to take this drastic step," he said on public broadcaster ORF.</p> <p>Not quite 66% of Austria's 8.9 million people are fully vaccinated, and inoculations have plateaued at one of the lowest rates in Western Europe.</p> <p>Austria is among several Western European countries where infections are rising rapidly and where there are concerns that vaccination rates are insufficient to hold off a winter surge at hospitals.</p> <p>Thanks largely to inoculations, hospitals in Austria are not under the same pressure they were earlier in the pandemic, but many are still straining to handle rising numbers of COVID-19 patients while also attempting to clear backlogs with exhausted or sick staff.</p> <p>Austria's new lockdown is its fourth since the pandemic began and comes as the country has struggled without success to stop spiraling case numbers. On Friday, it reported 15,809 new infections, an all-time high.</p> <p>Christmas markets, restaurants and most stores are closed for at least 10 days, while kindergartens and schools will remain open for those who need them, but all parents were asked to keep their children at home if possible.</p> <p>After 10 days, the lockdown's effects will be assessed. If virus cases have not gone down sufficiently, it can be extended to a maximum of 20 days. After that, the lockdown will be lifted for all vaccinated people but could stay in place for those who refuse to get vaccinated, the government says.</p> <p>The new measures, especially the vaccine mandate, have been met with fierce opposition among some in the country. A Saturday protest in the capital city of Vienna drew 40,000 people, according to police, including members of far-right parties and groups.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/22 German minister: get vaccinated or Covid</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/health-minister-tells-germans-vaccinated-covid-81323958">https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/health-minister-tells-germans-vaccinated-covid-81323958</a>
GIST	<p>BERLIN -- Germany's health minister said Monday that the rapid rise in coronavirus cases means it's likely everyone in the country who isn't vaccinated will have caught COVID-19 by the end of the winter — and some of those will die.</p>



	<p>Official figures showed more than 30,000 newly confirmed cases in Germany over the past 24 hours — an increase of about 50% compared to one week ago. Hospitals have warned that ICU capacities are nearly exhausted, with some patients having to be transferred to other clinics far away.</p> <p>Health Minister Jens Spahn urged Germans to get vaccinated, including with booster shots if their first round of inoculation occurred more than six months ago, to reduce the risk of serious illness.</p> <p>“By the end of this winter pretty much everyone in Germany (...) will have been vaccinated, recovered or died,” Spahn told reporters in Berlin.</p> <p>He acknowledged some had described this view as cynical. “But it's true. With the highly contagious delta variant this is very, very likely and that's why we are recommending vaccination so urgently,” said Spahn.</p> <p>Germany expects the European Union to approve vaccines against COVID-19 for children aged 5-11 at the end of the week, he said. School-age children have among the highest infection rates in the country.</p> <p>The EU will begin shipping vaccines adjusted for younger children on Dec. 20, with Germany initially getting 2.4 million doses, Spahn said.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>11/20 Seattle council debates funding for SPD</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/city-council-debates-funding-for-seattle-police-department/ar-AAQV6HS">https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/city-council-debates-funding-for-seattle-police-department/ar-AAQV6HS</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>SEATTLE (KOMO) — With skyrocketing crime, longer response times and officers fleeing the force, there's an urgent need for solutions now.</p> <p>Right now, the Seattle City Council has been in a contentious debate on how to fund the Seattle Police Department, hire and keep officers. The debate is going to a head on Monday.</p> <p>KOMO News spoke with Mayor Jenny Durkan about the way forward.</p> <p>Last weekend, five hours after a Woodland Park 7/11 was robbed, the clerk said Seattle Police still hadn't shown up yep.</p> <p>As frustrating as it was, Joe Batch knew about the turmoil and turnover stretching SPD thin.</p> <p>“The police have yet to show up which is interesting,” Batch said at the time. “It’s sad to see the police defunded, that’s the situation here honestly. I know there are a lot of good officers and they’d like to do a good job. I know politics and the city council isn’t allowing them to work.”</p> <p>The department has been in a contentious back and forth with the Seattle City Council about SPD’s future budget.</p> <p>Right now, SPD says they have 1,120 officers.</p> <p>In the mayor’s 2022 budget, the department has authorized funding for 1,357 sworn officers.</p> <p>That’s 237 still officers short.</p> <p>“Now is not the time to both be cutting officers also but every time council acts, they’re telling officers that are here today if they’re valued or not,” said Durkan. “Obviously we want them well trained, we want them to de-escalate, community-based policing, but at the same time sometimes you need a police officer.”</p>

On Monday, the council shot down amendments to restore millions of SPD cuts, but they did keep funding for six new community service officers.

Though they did also vote down a last-ditch effort from outgoing Council President Lorenza Gonzalez to cut 101 vacant positions from SPD. She says SPD didn't have plans to fulfill the positions in 2022.

Gonzalez sent a statement saying, "My proposed budget amendment would not have reduced the current number of officers at SPD nor would it have reduced the SPD's plan to hire 1,357 sworn officers. The amendment would have ensured that the funding appropriated to SPD salaries in future years match what is actually needed, preventing the over-spending of taxpayer dollars on vacant positions that SPD admits it cannot and will not be able to hire in 2022 or 2023."

"We can't cut anywhere when it comes to the safety of our city. We already don't have enough," said Victoria Beach with the African American Community Advisory Council.

The council is set to vote the budget out of committee on Monday.

The outgoing mayor hopes in the future, council will collaborate with mayor-elect Bruce Harrell—and listen to what the voters wanted.

"I really hope in January there's a big reset, that mayor-elect Harrell is given the opportunity to do what the people of Seattle said they want to do, which is hire more police and also standup more alternatives," said Mayor Durkan.

KOMO News also reached out to Harrell about his plan forward. He says the city needs more public safety resources, not fewer.

His campaign sent a statement saying: "As he pledged during the campaign, Mayor-elect Harrell is committed to creating a safer Seattle for all communities by making necessary investments to reach national best practice staffing levels, decrease response times, and hire and train needed officers, in addition to improving training, creating unarmed and alternative responses, and changing the culture within SPD. Public safety will be a top priority for the Mayor-elect in office and as he works with the City Council to develop and implement future budgets."

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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Snohomish Co. incentives for police hires</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://lynnwoodtimes.com/2021/11/21/incentive-packages-for-police/">https://lynnwoodtimes.com/2021/11/21/incentive-packages-for-police/</a>
GIST	<p><b>SNOHOMISH COUNTY, Wash., November 21, 2021</b> – Following an unprecedented number of officers who left their jobs last year, police departments throughout Snohomish County continue to offer incentive packages to fill vacancies.</p> <p>In cities like Everett and Lynnwood, officers currently working in Washington state are eligible for up to a \$20,000 hiring incentive until December 31, 2021, for those who successfully complete their probation.</p> <p>Over 200 Seattle police officers resigned from their positions in 2020, almost 20% of the city's force, <a href="#">CBS reported</a>, which proceeded to explain that many officers voiced frustration with the state's <a href="#">new police reform legislation</a> paired with the <a href="#">George Floyd protests and riots</a> of last year. The resignations were not limited to Washington's largest city, however.</p> <p>The Everett Police Department, Snohomish County's largest city's police force, lost over 1,100 years of police experience since 2014 and 295 years of experience within the first six months of 2021, including the resignations of six officers, three sergeants, two lieutenants and one deputy chief.</p> <p><b>City of Everett</b></p>

The Police Officer Incentive Program was approved by Everett City Council at its [May 29, 2019 meeting](#) to address the shortage of police officers, difficulty hiring, and unanticipated retirees. At the time the program was passed there were 8 vacant police positions available, which has now increased to 17 vacancies as of November 18, 2021.

In 2017 the Everett City Council approved a similar incentive program that was re-approved at their 2019 meeting, reinstating the same provisions for out-of-state lateral hires but this time increasing the monetary incentive to \$20,000 for in-state lateral hires.

In the approved [Memorandum of Understanding](#) between the city of Everett and the Everett Police Department (which has been extended until December 31, 2021) the two entities agreed to the following:  
For in-state lateral hires:

- To offer a monetary incentive of \$20,000 to lateral hires from a Washington state law enforcement agency who successfully completes their 4th anniversary with the Everett PD
- To pay lateral hires from a Washington State law enforcement agency \$7,500 upon Commissioning, \$7,500 upon successful transition to Phase 5 of field training, and \$5,000 upon successful completion of probation
- Upon voluntary separation or termination for misconduct as a police officer prior to the fourth anniversary of the officer's hire, the officer will be required to repay a prorated amount of the incentive back to the city of Everett
- Each Washington state lateral hire offered a monetary incentive shall be provided and sign a written document acknowledging the terms above

For out-of-state lateral hires:

- To offer a monetary incentive of \$15,000 to out-of-state lateral hires who successfully complete their fourth anniversary as an Everett police officer
- To pay out-of-state lateral hires \$5,000 upon Commissioning; \$5,000 upon successful transition to Phase 5 of field training, and \$5,000 upon successful completion of probation
- Upon voluntary separation or termination for misconduct as a police officer prior to the fourth anniversary of the officer's hire, the officer will be required to repay a prorated amount of the incentive back to the city of Everett
- Each Washington state lateral hire offered a monetary incentive shall be provided and sign a written document acknowledging the terms above

Lateral hire police officers, with a starting salary of \$8,549 per month, are highly desirable to police departments due to the significantly reduced amount of time between their date of hire and when they are independent, fully functional police officers. Additionally, departments see an immediate benefit from the experience the lateral hires bring from their previous employment, which is paramount when losing experienced officers due to retirement.

Additionally, in-state lateral hires are not required to attend the Washington State Law Enforcement Equivalency Academy and are already proficient in state laws and court rulings. This typically results in reducing the training time necessary to prepare an in-state lateral versus an out-of-state lateral.

To apply click [here](#) or for more information about the application process for an experienced police officer with the Everett Police Department click [here](#). To contact their recruitment office, email [EverettPDrecruiter@everettwa.gov](mailto:EverettPDrecruiter@everettwa.gov).

#### **Other Snohomish County Cities**

**Lynnwood:** A [similar agreement](#) between the city of Lynnwood and the Lynnwood Police Guild, representing Lynnwood's police officers and sergeants, was signed into effect on January 1, 2019, that lasts until December 31, 2021. There are currently four vacancies within the department.

The successful applicants hired as lateral police officers will receive a \$20,000 incentive and an hourly salary between \$37.95 – \$45.99. To apply, click [here](#).

	<p><b>Lake Stevens:</b> Lake Stevens is a vibrant and growing community – the second fastest-growing city in Snohomish County. It is offering a \$10,000 lateral bonus. To learn more click <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p><b>Marysville:</b> With a monthly salary between \$6,367 to \$7,939, the city of <a href="#">Marysville is offering</a> a \$20,000 lateral incentive bonus and education incentive pay for police officers. In addition to a police officer, the city is also looking to hire a custody officer. <a href="#">Lateral level Custody Officer</a> applicants hired by the Marysville Police Department will receive a \$5,000 incentive.</p> <p><b>Mukilteo:</b> Mukilteo is also currently looking to fill <a href="#">lateral police officer</a> positions including a motorcycle officer with an incentive program of \$15,000, of which \$5,000 will be paid upon the first paycheck after being formally hired; \$5,000 will be paid upon successfully completing the probation period; and the remaining \$5,000 to be paid after the officer's third year with the force. The monthly salary will range from \$6,678 to \$7,578.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Protesters trace Rittenhouse route Kenosha</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/jackson-to-join-kenosha-march-to-protest-rittenhouse-verdict/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/jackson-to-join-kenosha-march-to-protest-rittenhouse-verdict/</a>
GIST	<p>KENOSHA, Wis. (AP) — Several dozen people gathered below the wind-whipped Wisconsin flag at Kenosha's Civic Center Park on Sunday and warmed up with chants for justice before taking to the streets in protest of the acquittal of Kyle Rittenhouse.</p> <p>Demonstrators traced the route Rittenhouse took the night in August last year when he shot and killed two people and wounded a third during protests over police brutality. They carried signs that said "Reject Racist Vigilante Terror" and "THE WHOLE SYSTEM IS GUILTY!" A couple of protesters carried long guns.</p> <p>Protesters regularly chanted, "No justice, no peace" and "Anthony and Jo Jo," the latter referring to Anthony Huber and Joseph Rosenbaum, both of whom were shot and killed by Rittenhouse.</p> <p>The Rev. Jesse Jackson, 80, who walked the first leg of a protest march in Chicago on Saturday, was scheduled to appear in Kenosha, but did not come. Organizers said he instead was working with congressional leaders to ask that the Department of Justice investigate the case for further prosecution. A release from Jackson's Rainbow PUSH Coalition earlier Sunday said the Justice Department should also consider aiding and abetting charges for Rittenhouse's mother.</p> <p>"The verdict of not guilty is very revealing of the state of criminal justice in America," Bishop Grant, the Rainbow PUSH Coalition National Field Director, said in a statement.</p> <p>While Grant's statement said Rittenhouse violated federal laws, he did not explain further and experts say Rittenhouse is unlikely to face federal charges because federal law applies only in very limited cases for homicides.</p> <p>Rittenhouse, a then-17-year-old former police youth cadet from Antioch, Illinois, said he went to Kenosha with an AR-15-style semi-automatic rifle to protect property from rioters but that he came under attack and feared for his life.</p> <p>The shootings happened during a tumultuous night of protests over the shooting of a Black man, Jacob Blake, by a white Kenosha police officer.</p> <p>Rittenhouse is white, as were those he shot, and his acquittal led to new debates over racial justice, vigilantism and policing in America.</p> <p>Derrick Johnson, NAACP president and CEO, said Sunday that the verdict was hard for African Americans to reconcile.</p>

“Here you have a 17-year-old who illegally purchased a gun, traveled across state lines to protect property that was not his, for owners who did not invite him, and he put himself in harm’s way based on the rhetoric that he’s seen on social media platforms,” Johnson told CBS’ “Face the Nation.” He called it “a warning shot that vigilante justice is allowed in this country or in particular communities.”

Rittenhouse’s lawyers described him as a scared teenager who shot to save his life.

“I didn’t intend to kill them,” Rittenhouse testified. “I intended to stop the people who were attacking me.”

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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Philippines redeploys boats disputed shoal</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/philippines-redeploys-boats-to-shoal-after-chinese-blockade/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/philippines-redeploys-boats-to-shoal-after-chinese-blockade/</a>
GIST	<p>MANILA, Philippines (AP) — The Philippine military defiantly redeployed two supply boats on Monday to provide food to Filipino marines guarding a disputed shoal in the South China Sea after the Chinese coast guard used water cannons to forcibly turn the boats away in an assault last week that drew angry condemnation and warnings from Manila.</p> <p>Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said the two civilian wooden-hulled boats carrying navy personnel left western Palawan province and should reach the marines stationed on a navy ship at Second Thomas Shoal after an overnight trip. Lorenzana said the boats aren’t being escorted by the navy or coast guard in accordance with a request by China’s ambassador to Manila, who, he said, assured him in talks over the weekend that the boats would not be blocked again.</p> <p>A navy plane will nevertheless fly over the remote shoal, which has been surrounded by Chinese surveillance ships in a years-long territorial standoff, when the Filipino boats reach it, the defense chief said. The Philippines says the shoal is in its internationally recognized exclusive economic zone, but China insists it has sovereignty over the waters.</p> <p>“The Chinese ambassador assured me they will not be impeded but they requested there should be no escort,” Lorenzana told reporters. Asked if he expects that the vessels won’t be blocked, he replied, “We will see.”</p> <p>The government conveyed its “outrage, condemnation and protest of the incident” to China after two Chinese coast guard ships blocked the two Filipino boats on Tuesday and a third coast guard ship sprayed high-pressure streams of water on the boats, which were forced to abort their mission to transport food to the marines guarding the shoal, officials said.</p> <p>Philippine Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. ordered Beijing’s ships to back off and warned China that Manila’s supply boats are covered by a mutual defense treaty with the United States. Washington later said it was standing by the Philippines “in the face of this escalation that directly threatens regional peace and stability,” and reiterated “that an armed attack on Philippine public vessels in the South China Sea would invoke U.S. mutual defense commitments” under the 1951 U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty.</p> <p>In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian responded to the Philippine protests by saying that China’s coast guard had upheld Chinese sovereignty after the Philippine ships entered Chinese waters at night without permission.</p> <p>It was the latest flareup in long-simmering territorial disputes in the strategic waterway, where China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan have overlapping claims. China claims virtually the entire South China Sea and has transformed seven shoals into missile-protected island bases to cement its assertions, ratcheting up tensions.</p>

Philippine national security adviser Hermogenes Esperon said the number of Chinese surveillance ships has increased alarmingly in recent weeks at the shoal and also around Thitu, a larger Philippine-occupied island in the Spratly archipelago in the South China Sea's most hotly contested area.

China has recently renewed its call to the Philippines to tow away its navy ship BRP Sierra Madre, which Filipino marines have used as an outpost, and offered Chinese help, a Philippine official said on condition of anonymity because of a lack of authority to discuss the sensitive issue publicly.

But the Philippine government has said it will never withdraw from the shoal and cited a 2016 ruling by a U.N.-backed international arbitration panel that invalidated China's historic claims to virtually the entire South China Sea. China has rejected and continues to defy the ruling.

The Philippine military deliberately ran aground the Sierra Madre, a World War II-era warship provided by the U.S., at the submerged shoal in 1999 in a move to fortify its claim. The Sierra Madre is now effectively a shipwreck but the Philippine military has not decommissioned it. That makes the rust-encrusted ship an extension of the government and means any assault on the ship is tantamount to an attack against the Philippines.

A Philippine senator, Panfilo Lacson, said he flew to Thitu on Saturday and his jet received a radio message from the Chinese coast guard warning it to stay away. Lacson, who is running for president in next year's election, said he and his companions landed on the island, where he planted three Philippine flags and led a flag-raising ceremony while Chinese coast guard ships patrolled nearby.

"This is my country, not theirs. They had no right," said Lacson, a former national police chief.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Californians flee coast to the Inland Empire</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/californians-flee-the-coast-to-inland-cities-in-a-mass-pandemic-era-exodus-11637521731?mod=hp_lead_pos9">https://www.wsj.com/articles/californians-flee-the-coast-to-inland-cities-in-a-mass-pandemic-era-exodus-11637521731?mod=hp_lead_pos9</a>
GIST	<p><a href="#">Since moving</a> out of the Los Angeles area, Eva and Randy Fluker say they miss summer weekends at the beach, monthly trips to Disneyland and their favorite Mexican food and ramen joints.</p> <p>They don't miss trying to squeeze their work life, two stuck-at-home kids and Ms. Fluker's 98-year-old grandmother into a 1,700 square-foot house in Norwalk, Calif. They joined a <a href="#">pandemic-era</a> exodus of Californians to the Riverside-San Bernardino metropolitan area known as the Inland Empire, the biggest movement of people in the most populous state in America.</p> <p>The Flukers followed some quarter-million others who last year moved east to the 27,000 square-mile swath of Southern California that stretches from the Los Angeles County border to Arizona and Nevada.</p> <p>The Inland Empire effectively tied the Phoenix region in 2020 for the biggest gain in households from migration nationwide, according to U.S. Postal Service permanent change-of-address data. Phoenix-area migration gains shrank last year from 2019, while the pandemic accelerated the flow of humanity into Riverside and San Bernardino counties by 50%, the postal data show.</p> <p>The migration is shuffling California's demographics. Increasingly, the state's middle class is moving to inland desert and mountain communities. Its coastal cities such as L.A. and San Francisco are housing more of its affluent residents and low-income people who can't afford to move.</p> <p>The drive from the Inland Empire to jobs in Los Angeles and Orange counties is long but bearable, a price many newcomers have long been willing to pay in exchange for <a href="#">less expensive houses</a> and better-performing schools. The pandemic provided remote workers one more reason: a chance to dodge sluggish freeway commutes altogether.</p>



Nearly a half-million California households—both individuals and families—moved from one metropolitan area to another throughout the state, and many left coastal regions, where home prices have jumped to new highs.

The median price for existing single-family homes in California hit a record \$827,940 in August, more than 17% higher than a year earlier, according to the California Association of Realtors. In Riverside County, where the Flukers moved, the median figure in August was \$570,000, compared with \$830,070 in Los Angeles County and \$1.85 million in San Francisco.

“People say over and over again, ‘Oh, the millennials are going to stay in the cities.’ They are not,” said Doug Shepherd, a real-estate broker based in the city of Riverside.

The Flukers found a five-bedroom, 3,700 square-foot house with a Jacuzzi and a yard big enough to grow strawberries, bok choy and kale. They paid \$670,000 for the property, located in a former dairy town called Eastvale. They are a two-hour drive to downtown Los Angeles in rush hour and half that during other times of the day.

Last year, a net of 129,000 households left California, according to postal data, a small share of the state’s 13.5 million households. Separately, the state Department of Finance said California logged its first yearly population loss in 2020.

Most Californians aren’t fleeing the Golden State, said D.J. Waldie, a cultural historian who has written extensively about Los Angeles. Instead, residents are spreading out.

“California is changing because of a desire of many millions of people to have something that looks like the conventional, traditional California Dream: a house on a lot in a neighborhood of similar houses on lots,” Mr. Waldie said.

The pandemic boosted the flow of households from California’s coastal counties to other parts by nearly 50%, postal data show.

A net 97,000 households left the Los Angeles metropolitan area, and the San Francisco metro area lost about 67,000. The city of San Francisco lost a net of 44,000 households last year, about one-eighth of its total. Many from the city settled in the Sacramento metro area, about 90 miles northeast.

In Southern California, the center of the state’s shift, the Inland Empire had a net gain of 25,000 households last year, according to the postal data. That figure doesn’t count immigration, a longtime source of new Californians.

Over the past 30 years, the population of the Inland Empire has grown by 78% to 4.6 million, more than twice as fast as the state during that time. Financial data firm CoreLogic recently reported that more home buyers had moved into the Inland Empire last year than any other metropolitan area in the U.S.

The local economy is booming with dozens of warehouses for e-commerce companies like Walmart Inc. and Amazon.com Inc., which operates a two million square-foot fulfillment center, one of the company’s largest.

The stampede of new arrivals has bid up housing prices and pushed out some working- and middle-class families. For every 10 households that moved to the Inland Empire, nearly eight moved out, largely to less expensive locales in Arizona, Texas and Nevada, part of a march east. Some older residents are selling homes to help fund retirement elsewhere.

The Flukers sold their house in Norwalk for \$632,000 and bought a place more than twice as big in Eastvale, on a fifth of an acre, for close to the same price.

Ms. Fluker's employer, a healthcare recruiting company based 60 miles west in El Segundo, Calif., allowed her to work from home permanently. Mr. Fluker's commute to Los Angeles County's San Gabriel Valley will be roughly the same once his in-person work schedule resumes.

That made the family move a no-brainer, Ms. Fluker said: "Being able to purchase what we consider our final home—for us, it's a very big accomplishment."

### **Trading places**

Decades ago, as postwar suburbs boomed around Los Angeles, Portuguese and Dutch dairymen moved out of the way, relocating their herds east to former citrus groves in Riverside County.

Since 2000, about 15,000 homes have been built in Eastvale, making up 92% of its housing. The population grew to 70,000 from 4,000. New tracts, top-rated schools and landscaped thoroughfares covered former pastures. By the end of 2020, the city's last dairy farm closed.

The rapper Kendrick Lamar purchased an Eastvale home in 2013, not long after his first album went platinum. He recently sold the house for \$825,000, about \$300,000 more than he paid, records show. Representatives for Mr. Lamar didn't respond to a request for comment.

"It's safe, it's family-oriented and also diverse," said Jocelyn Yow, the city's 26-year-old mayor. About 40% of residents are Hispanic, 30% are Asian and 9% are Black, according to census data, and Eastvale ranks among the highest in median household income—\$119,213—of any city in the region.

Ms. Yow compared her city with Irvine, Calif., the affluent master-planned community about an hour's drive away in Orange County. "We have everything that Irvine has to offer," she said, "but half price."

Among the eight retail businesses that opened last year were a Sprouts supermarket, a ramen restaurant and a yoga studio. Another two dozen businesses are expected to open in the next year, Ms. Yow said.

Pastor Mark Lee, whose 1,800-person congregation at VantagePoint Church is the city's largest, commemorated the opening of a 600-seat church building last year. Indoor services at the Protestant church began in January, and he said he estimated it has drawn twice as many first-time visitors this year compared with pre-pandemic services. Many, he said, have come from cities closer to the coast.

Jamie and Yulia Morris left Santa Monica, Calif., the locale of one of Southern California's most popular beaches, to live in Riverside, the Inland Empire's largest city. The couple recently paid more than \$1.2 million for a six-bedroom house with a rooftop deck and Jacuzzi on a 2-acre lot. They had been paying \$1,680 a month for a 475-square-foot studio apartment in Santa Monica.

Since moving to Riverside, about 20 miles from Eastvale, they have been visited by wild donkeys. Bobcats hunt rabbits on their property.

"We're definitely giving up a lot," Mr. Morris said. His wife, a photographer, loved daily strolls on the beach. Restaurants, shops and grocery stores were all walkable. Yet, Mr. Morris said, he has felt as though a weight has been lifted, and that with more space, he and his wife can move onto the next phase of their lives. They are thinking more seriously about having children, he said.

Five miles away, near downtown Riverside, Lorena Guy and her husband, Terry, learned two things shortly after moving from Los Angeles last year: Their new home lacked good Cuban food, and, judging from the Trump bumper stickers, Riverside County was a purple enclave in the deep-blue state.

Since 2010, Republicans in Riverside County have gone from having a 5 percentage-point voter registration advantage over Democrats to an 8 percentage-point deficit. The county favored President Biden by 8 percentage points in the 2020 election. Statewide, Mr. Biden had a nearly 30-point lead.

“It’s much healthier living in a politically diverse area, because you’re allowed the possibility of dialogue with people that don’t think the way you think,” said Ms. Guy, a Democrat whose childhood in Cuba was steeped in ultraliberal politics.

The couple paid \$715,000 for a Craftsman-style bungalow with a covered front porch. Inside, a bookcase hides the entrance to a basement they intend to transform into a speakeasy-style den. Friends who first joked the Guys were moving to a farm have since visited, inquiring about local real-estate listings.

### **Priced out**

The arrival of newcomers like the Guys and the Morrisises has changed the fortunes of many longtime Inland Empire residents.

Erin Chavez’s parents moved there from the city of Anaheim in Orange County when she was 10 years old. Like others, her parents wanted a bigger home and better schools. After they divorced, Ms. Chavez’s mother lost her home to foreclosure in 2009, when fallout from the financial crisis sank the Inland Empire’s housing market.

As an adult, Ms. Chavez, 31, has kept moving east, trying to outrun rising housing costs. Her Moreno Valley home was bursting at the seams with six family members last year, and rising prices sent her on another house hunt.

She and her family found a 3,200-square-foot dream home in Beaumont, one of the fastest-growing Inland Empire cities. They now have a backyard that bleeds into nature trails. Two community pools are a short drive away, an escape for summer days when temperatures in parts of the region can reach 115 degrees.

“Obviously, if money wasn’t an object, I’d be living on the ocean,” she said.

Between 2000 and 2019, the state’s median rent jumped 35%, adjusted for inflation, according to the nonprofit California Housing Partnership. Over that same period, the median price of existing single-family homes statewide rose to \$591,866, according to the California Association of Realtors, a 95% increase when adjusted for inflation.

Home-building has failed to keep pace with California’s population growth for decades, in part because of grass roots antigrowth and antitax efforts. The Proposition 13 voter initiative in 1978 capped property tax increases, giving local officials an incentive to favor commercial development, which generates sales tax revenue.

Upon taking office in 2019, Gov. Gavin Newsom set a goal of building half a million new housing units a year for seven years. From 2016 through 2020, the state averaged 109,000 new homes a year, according to the Construction Industry Research Board, a service provided by the California Homebuilding Foundation which tracks building permits.

The nonpartisan state Legislative Analyst’s Office has estimated the state needs to build twice as many homes each year to meet demand.

Short supply has left the Inland Empire’s half-million renters with fewer affordable choices. After a divorce two years ago, Bandit Hall was priced out of Los Angeles. He moved with his two children to Yucca Valley, a desert town 30 miles northeast of Palm Springs. Rents are lower, yet the family’s three-bedroom house costs \$1,475 a month, equal to about three-quarters of Mr. Hall’s pay as a grant coordinator for a local nonprofit.

A similar home in western San Bernardino or Riverside counties—closer to his office and in neighborhoods with better schools—would cost three times as much, he said.

Last year, a half-dozen families left Eastvale for Montgomery County, Texas, a suburb of Houston near lakes and resorts.

	<p>Michele Nissen, a former city manager of Eastvale, was among them. She sold her house in June for \$910,000, 3½ times what she paid for it in 2001.</p> <p>Now, she and her husband own a 3,500-square-foot, four-bedroom home surrounded by dozens of trees and down the street from Lake Conroe. They paid \$532,500.</p> <p>Ms. Nissen, 51, said she doesn't have to work for the couple to live comfortably, in part because of the proceeds from the sale of their California house. "It feels like freedom," she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 China hypersonic missile sophisticated test</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/advanced-maneuver-in-china-hypersonic-missile-test-shows-new-military-capability-11637545843?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1">https://www.wsj.com/articles/advanced-maneuver-in-china-hypersonic-missile-test-shows-new-military-capability-11637545843?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1</a>
GIST	<p>A hypersonic missile test China carried out last summer involved a sophisticated maneuver in which a projectile was fired from the system during the flight, according to U.S. officials, in a sign that the Chinese program is more advanced than previously known.</p> <p>The hypersonic test, which was earlier reported this fall, and the <a href="#">advanced capabilities of the Chinese missile</a>, show the pace at which the Chinese are developing advanced weaponry that is outpacing American technology. U.S. officials have expressed concern that <a href="#">Beijing is moving faster than expected</a> to build platforms that could target American ports or installations in the Indo-Pacific region.</p> <p>The new details of the advanced capabilities of the hypersonic test were earlier reported Sunday by the Financial Times, which said the flight had occurred in July.</p> <p>There was an additional test of a hypersonic missile in August. It wasn't clear if the projectile that was fired during the July test was a missile or a decoy designed to confuse missile defenses.</p> <p>Pentagon officials declined to comment on the hypersonic missile maneuver. But the new capability has intensified scrutiny of <a href="#">Beijing's already sizable military buildup</a>, U.S. officials said.</p> <p>Hypersonic missiles fly at least five times the speed of sound and move closer to the Earth than intercontinental ballistic missiles making them extremely difficult for existing radar systems to detect.</p> <p>In an interview with CBS News last week, Air Force Gen. John Hyten, who until last week was the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, provided the fullest public explanation yet of what the U.S. understanding is of the Chinese hypersonic missile test in August.</p> <p>"They launched a long-range missile," Gen. Hyten said during that interview. "It went around the world, dropped off a hypersonic glide vehicle that glided all the way back to China, that impacted a target in China."</p> <p>Officials have said the missile missed its target by more than 20 miles. Gen. Hyten said the missile came "close enough" to hitting its target.</p> <p>Last month, while talking with reporters Gen. Hyten said that the U.S. had fallen behind in its development of hypersonic technology. In the past five years, the U.S. has conducted nine hypersonic tests while China has launched hundreds, he said.</p> <p>Earlier this month, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Staff Army Gen. Mark Milley called the test nearly a "Sputnik moment." Last week, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin declined to say if it was as momentous, but noted that the U.S. has many concerns about the military capabilities China continues to develop.</p> <p>"We continue to move as fast as we can to develop capabilities," Mr. Austin told reporters.</p>

	<p>The U.S. hasn't been as focused or moved as quickly to advance its hypersonic technology as Russia and China, defense officials have said, giving priority to other technologies instead. The Army said it would be ready to launch a hypersonic missile test in 2024. Meanwhile the Navy is looking to develop a hypersonic weapon that could launch off its destroyers and submarines.</p> <p>Gen. David Thompson, vice chief of space operations at the U.S. Space Force, told the Halifax International Security Forum on Saturday that the U.S. has "catching up to do."</p> <p>China has had "an incredibly aggressive hypersonic program for several years," Gen. Thompson said.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>11/22 SUV plows into Christmas parade crowd</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/11/21/waukesha-parade-suv-crash/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2021/11/21/waukesha-parade-suv-crash/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Five people were killed and more than 40 were injured after a driver in an SUV plowed through a Christmas parade in Waukesha, Wis., Sunday evening, officials said.</p> <p>The number of those dead and injured could increase as more information is gathered, the Waukesha Police Department said early Monday morning.</p> <p>Authorities have recovered the driver's vehicle and have taken one person into custody, Waukesha Police Chief Dan Thompson said at a news conference Sunday evening. He did not comment on a possible motive behind the attack.</p> <p>Waukesha Fire Chief Steven Howard said first responders activated their "mass casualty protocols" and took 23 people to hospitals, including 12 children. Additional people were transported to medical facilities by the police and family members, he said.</p> <p>The vehicle broke through barricades about 4:40 p.m. local time, roughly 40 minutes after the parade began. In interviews, witnesses recounted the terrifying scene after the vehicle barreled into the crowd, shattering the festive mood at the annual Christmas parade in Waukesha, about 20 miles west of Milwaukee.</p> <p>Waukesha Mayor Shawn Reilly participated in the parade and described a jubilant atmosphere that quickly turned nightmarish. "Today we experienced a horrible, senseless tragedy," he said. "I walked in the parade at the beginning. I saw all the happy children sitting on the curb. I saw all the happy parents behind their children. I can still see the smiling faces."</p> <p>In video of the parade streamed by the city to its Facebook page, the SUV is seen speeding down the parade route seconds after a marching band playing "Jingle Bells" had passed. Onlookers screamed at the sight of the vehicle barreling down Main Street, whizzing past a Jeep that was outfitted in Christmas lights, as a police officer chased the SUV on foot.</p> <p>After the parade carried on for a few minutes, emergency vehicles sped by, sirens and lights blaring, as a group of children dancing with snowflake props tried to carry on with their performance.</p> <p>A police officer fired at the SUV in an attempt to stop it, said Thompson, the police chief. No bystanders were injured by the gunfire, he said, adding that the authorities did not believe any shots were fired from the vehicle.</p> <p>"We heard people screaming," Zack Heisler, a Milwaukee resident at the parade with his family, told The Washington Post. "It sounded like excitement, and the screaming sounded closer, then it sounded like terror. People sounded scared." Heisler said he saw a car "flying past us" and "people flying everywhere."</p>

Thompson said Sunday evening that the investigation was still “very fluid.” He said it was “unknown at this time whether the incident has any nexus to terrorism.” The FBI said it was assisting local authorities in the investigation.

Kaylee Staral, an intern at the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel newspaper, attended the parade with her family, who took their spots next to parents and children with candy bags and blankets. “It was supposed to be an exciting event,” Staral, 20, said in an interview with The Post. “A bunch of little kids were there. People were there to get in the holiday season.”

Minutes later, the SUV shot past Staral and her family, and they watched as it rammed into participants. She counted four people injured on the pavement in front of her. All around, people were screaming and crying as they rushed into stores for shelter and tried to help those injured.

“Everyone was just watching the parade go by and having a good time,” Staral said. “I don’t think anyone expected anything like this to happen.”

Corey Montiho, a Waukesha School District board member, was with his family at the parade, where his daughter’s dance team was performing. They were watching a high school marching band when the vehicle plowed through, hitting several of his daughter’s team members, he said. People scrambled to help, he said. “I saw bodies and kids and dads not breathing,” Montiho said. His daughter was not injured, but many of her teammates were in critical condition early Monday morning, he said.

Montiho said he had made eye contact with the man driving the SUV, describing him as “calm and composed.”

The episode shocked the community of more than 70,000 just days before Thanksgiving. The Archdiocese of Milwaukee said in a statement that one of its priests, as well as multiple Waukesha Catholic School students and members of the church, were among those injured.

The Milwaukee Dancing Grannies, which describes itself as a “group of grannies that meet once a week” to practice dance routines for parades, said its members were also injured. “Please keep the Grannies, all those injured, and all those who witnessed this horrible event in your thoughts and prayers,” the group said in a Facebook post.

Scott Walker, former governor of Wisconsin, said his mother attended the parade and watched the SUV drive past. She left before it collided with people, but people soon came running past her, Walker said on Twitter. “She said it felt like the images of people running in NYC on 9/11,” Walker said.

School was canceled on Monday for students in the Waukesha School District, the superintendent said in a note, adding that counselors were to be provided on Monday at school buildings for students in need of support.

Gov. Tony Evers said he and his wife were “praying for Waukesha tonight and all the kids, families and community members affected by this senseless act.”

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HEADLINE	<b>11/22 Europe’s unvaccinated in open rebellion</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/11/22/squeezed-by-mandates-restrictions-europes-anti-vaxxers-rebel/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/11/22/squeezed-by-mandates-restrictions-europes-anti-vaxxers-rebel/</a>
GIST	<b>Shouting cries of “freedom” and “resistance,” Europe’s unvaccinated are in open rebellion, taking to the streets against a host of new mandates and restrictions as the continent’s coronavirus cases soar.</b> Their anger comes as their world is shrinking. Branded with a proverbial Scarlet “A,” the anti-vaxxers of Europe are finding themselves ostracized from public life far more than their American counterparts.



Many are not taking it sitting down. The European Union is no stranger to protests against coronavirus measures. But the weekend saw a [convergence of large and sometimes violent demonstrations](#) in multiple countries. In what the mayor of Rotterdam, decried as an “orgy of violence” on Friday, [Dutch police opened fire and arrested scores of rioters who set fires and lobbed stones at officers](#) amid a new partial lockdown and [proposed law](#) that would ban the unvaccinated from entering businesses even with a negative coronavirus test. Thousands also marched against mandates or restrictions [in Belgium, Croatia, Italy, Northern Ireland and Switzerland](#).

In Vienna, where the unvaccinated face the prospect of extended lockdowns and a revolutionary decree compelling them to take their jabs whether they like it or not, an estimated 40,000 demonstrators took to the streets Saturday, [some of them clashing with police as night fell](#).

The simmering discontent was not confined to Europe. [In Australia, thousands turned out against pandemic legislation in “freedom” marches in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide. France deployed special police forces to its overseas territory of Guadeloupe](#) after days of unrest that saw protesters set fire to cars and block roads in opposition to French vaccine and health pass mandates.

The outburst of anger — particularly in Europe, a place American liberals often look to as a beacon of progressive values on climate change, social benefits and universal health care — illustrates just how challenging it may be for rich nations, now flush with vaccines, to overcome vaccine hesitancy and push closer to near-total coverage rates.

Europe’s creep toward winter has brought a dangerous escalation in cases — in some countries, the highest of the pandemic — and indoor gatherings in colder weather is not the only culprit. [With nearly 67 percent of its population fully vaccinated](#), the European Union has leapfrogged the United States on doses administered. But across the continent, there are still stubborn geographic, demographic and ideological pockets of the unvaccinated serving as tinder for severe cases of the virus to rekindle.

**In response, European leaders are embracing novel, coercive techniques to compel the unvaccinated to do their civic duty and take their shots**, setting up a political experiment that is being closely watched on the other side of the Atlantic, where Washington has turned to [more limited vaccine mandates for federal employees, government contractors, health-care workers and staff of large companies](#).

[Italy’s “green pass” system imposes work suspensions or restrictions on access to a range of businesses for those without vaccinations or recent tests](#). France embraced a “health pass” requiring vaccination or a recent negative coronavirus test to access restaurants, cafes, movie theaters and more. In Romania, where the number of infections is skyrocketing, the unvaccinated were targeted in October for a special curfew that was later extended to everyone as cases continued to spike. Vaccination certificates are still required for regular activities like working out at gyms or shopping at malls.

No European nation has gone as far as Austria. A spike in cases coupled with vaccine hesitancy — 64 percent of the population is fully vaccinated, a rate lower than those in Italy, France, Portugal and Germany — prompted leaders there to announce a nationwide vaccination mandate starting in February. As a stopgap, the country last week declared a lockdown of the unvaccinated. The government later imposed Europe’s first broader national lockdown of the fall, one set to start Monday and last at least 10 days. After that, the lockdown may end for the vaccinated, but the [unvaccinated will still face entry restrictions at hotels, restaurants, bars, nightclubs, gyms, cinemas, theaters, Christmas markets, ski resorts and for personal services such as salons](#).

That may leave anti-vaccine Austrians eating their schnitzels at home for the foreseeable future, and they are not amused. Some demonstrators wore a yellow star with the words “not vaccinated,” a reference the symbols warn by prisoners in Nazi concentration camps. [The move drew outrage from officials like Interior Minister Karl Nehammer, who said the use of such symbols “insults the millions of victims of the Nazi dictatorship and their families.”](#)

“Society is being massively divided and set against a group of people who are being shut out of public life and forced to do things we don’t want to do,” [Katja Schoissenger, a mother of two protesting in Vienna on Saturday, told the New York Times](#). “I have nothing against people who want to be vaccinated. It is a free decision, and I think that’s OK and legitimate, but I am a young, healthy person and it’s not an issue for me.”

**Some are questioning the imposition of such restrictions.** [Speaking to the BBC](#), Andrea Ammon, director for the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control, called mandatory vaccinations a “double-edged sword,” suggesting strict rules could make people who were still doubting the vaccines completely reject them. That could produce an even greater pool of government-resenting anti-vaxxers. It’s unclear whether tough measures are worth the social unrest they cause. In Italy, [my colleagues reported](#), vaccination rates ticked up 4.4 percentage points in the two months after the green pass law was announced. That was more than any other nation in Western Europe, but only marginally higher than the 3 percentage points increase seen across the European Union during the same period.

Europe’s vaccination holdouts share some commonalities with American anti-vaxxers, but they also have their own particular profile. They include members of far-right fringe groups, soccer fans, libertarians on both sides of the political spectrum and citizens scared off vaccines by an onslaught of misinformation.

Americans and European anti-vaxxers often share a distrust of government, but frequently for very different reasons. [As Alix Kroeger wrote in the New Statesman](#), Europe’s vaccine resistant and hesitant tend to tilt geographically toward the southeastern part of the continent, those nations that once lived behind the Iron Curtain and where communist authorities and subsequent elected governments were often little trusted by the people, including on health advice.

Today, those nations — [among them Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Slovakia and Croatia](#) — have by far the lowest vaccination rates in Europe.

“People don’t trust the state to act in the interest of the common good,” Florian Bieber, director of the Centre for Southeast European Studies at the University of Graz, in Austria, told Kroeger. “They don’t trust the messages coming from the state or even experts. They believe these are all driven by selfish interests.”

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HEADLINE	<b>11/19 TSA: ready for holiday travel surge</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/transportation/tsa-ready-for-holiday-travel-surge-despite-reports-of-staffing-concerns/">https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/transportation/tsa-ready-for-holiday-travel-surge-despite-reports-of-staffing-concerns/</a>
GIST	<p>The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) expects to screen about 20 million passengers during the Thanksgiving holiday, which runs from Friday, Nov. 19, through Sunday, Nov. 28.</p> <p>“We anticipate that travel may be very close to pre-pandemic levels this holiday, and we are staffed and prepared for the holiday travelers. We have deployed technologies that enhance detection capabilities and reduce physical contact, and it’s equally important that passengers are prepared with travel tips for the most efficient checkpoint experience,” said TSA Administrator David Pekoske. “With overall vaccination rates improving nationwide and greater confidence in healthy travel, there will be more people traveling so plan ahead, remain vigilant and practice kindness.”</p> <p>Pekoske’s comments come amidst reports that TSA is facing a hiring crisis exacerbated by the November 22 federal employee COVID-19 vaccination mandate. Many Transportation Security Officers remain unvaccinated and there is a concern that some of these, especially those employed part-time, will leave TSA and look for a job elsewhere rather than get the vaccine.</p> <p>The American Federation of Government Employees, the union representing 45,000 TSA officers nationwide, has called on the Biden Administration to change the vaccination deadline for federal</p>

employees to January 4 with a deadline of January 18 to be fully vaccinated. This extension is equivalent to the new deadline set for federal contractors.

But TSA said in a statement on November 17 that it “does not anticipate that the federal employee vaccine mandate will in any way impact the agency’s ability to staff for Thanksgiving travel”.

Similar reports could be found ahead of this year’s summer travel season and TSA was able to allay those fears. Thanksgiving however has historically seen the biggest increase in the number of travelers coming through TSA security checkpoints during the year and 2021 is expected to see a continuation of that trend. A lot will of course depend on how next week’s weather pans out across the country.

TSA has been on a year-long recruitment drive and its most recent hiring events to assist individuals interested in applying for a job as a Transportation Security Officer have been held at Gerald R. Ford International Airport in Michigan, and at the DoubleTree by Hilton Tampa Airport Westshore hotel in Florida.

Airlines are also on a hiring drive ahead of the holidays. American Airlines, for example, aims to mitigate staffing issues by hiring 4,000 new employees for the holidays and bringing back 1,800 flight attendants from leave this month.

Travelers can help reduce the impact on TSA checkpoints by traveling smart and, where possible, avoiding the busiest days. Typically, the busiest days during the Thanksgiving travel period are the Tuesday and Wednesday prior to Thanksgiving and the Sunday afterward. The highest travel day in TSA’s history was the Sunday after Thanksgiving of 2019 (pre-pandemic), when nearly 2.9 million individuals were screened at TSA security checkpoints nationwide. Travel volume this year is not expected to reach pre-pandemic levels, but it is expected to be notably higher in the weeks leading up to Thanksgiving.

The best way to ensure a smooth trip through the security screening process is to arrive early and be prepared. Travelers are encouraged to allow time to park their cars or return rental cars, check their bags with their airline, and get their boarding passes before heading to the security checkpoint. TSA recommends travelers getting to the terminal with plenty of time before their scheduled flight.

“I recommend that travelers pay attention to the guidance that the TSA officers are providing at the checkpoint,” Pekoske added. “They may be directing you to a shorter line or guiding you around someone who is moving slowly. And they may be giving you some advice that will lessen the likelihood that you’ll need a pat-down.”

TSA also offers various [tips](#) to help travelers arrive fully prepared. And if you are [traveling with Thanksgiving food](#), it is worth remembering that if it’s a solid item, then it can go through a checkpoint. However, if you can spill it, spread it, spray it, pump it or pour it, and it’s larger than 3.4 ounces, then it should go in a checked bag. Food items often need some additional security screening, so TSA recommends placing those items in a clear plastic bag or other container when packing them at home and then removing those items from your carry-on bag and placing them in a bin for screening at the checkpoint.

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HEADLINE	11/19 TSA marks 20 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of inception
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/transportation/tsa-marks-20th-anniversary/">https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/transportation/tsa-marks-20th-anniversary/</a>
GIST	<p>The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) recognized the 20th anniversary of the agency’s creation today with a special ceremony at the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport’s original Terminal A historic lobby.</p> <p>The livestreamed ceremony included a written message from President George W. Bush and special remarks by Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas and TSA Administrator David Pekoske. Former DHS Secretary (2005-2009) Michael Chertoff served as the keynote speaker. Other</p>

aspects of the event included the Colors presented by Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport (BWI) Color Guard, music (National Anthem and God Bless America) sung by a Transportation Security Officer, and videos honoring TSA's first 20 years.

"TSA was created from tragedy to protect the nation's transportation systems and as one nation, we must respond to defend and protect the United States of America," said Secretary Mayorkas speaking at the anniversary event. "As TSA marks the 20th year since its creation, they remain steadfast in the mission, standing firmly on the front lines of our country's leadership in security, and raising the bar for global aviation security."

On this date and in this DCA terminal 20 years ago, then President Bush signed and enacted into law the Aviation and Transportation Security Act (ATSA), and established the Transportation Security Administration to safeguard the nation's transportation system against the threat of a future attack. Congress passed and the President established this agency in only 68 days following the horrific events of 9/11. Over the course of two decades, TSA's screening process evolved from its origins in which the pat-down was the major element in screening to be the agency that deploys technology and pilots emerging tech for improvements in security that also reduce physical contact between officers and passengers.

"It is a privilege to recognize and honor the TSA workforce – past, present and future, for its enduring role in safeguarding the nation's transportation system and ensuring freedom of movement within the United States," said TSA Administrator David Pekoske. "Success in that mission lies in the commitment of a professional and highly skilled team focused on technologies and processes that enhance security."

Today's event kicks off a historical review of events as they occurred following the establishment of TSA. The theme for this year-long campaign is 20 Years Protecting the Nation: Remembering Our Past, Securing Our Future. As an essential aspect of our history, TSA employees shared their stories on what the 20th anniversary of TSA means to them. For more information, please visit: TSA's Remembering our past, securing our future.

A recording of the TSA 20th Anniversary Ceremony Video can be found on TSA's YouTube page.

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[Read more at TSA](#)

HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Iran nuclear standoff: risks growing</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/21/us/politics/iran-nuclear-standoff.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/21/us/politics/iran-nuclear-standoff.html</a>
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Over the past 20 months, Israeli intelligence operatives have <a href="#">assassinated Iran's chief nuclear scientist</a> and triggered major explosions at four Iranian nuclear and missile facilities, hoping to cripple the centrifuges that produce nuclear fuel and delay the day when Tehran's new government might be able to build a bomb.</p> <p>But American intelligence officials and international inspectors say the Iranians have quickly gotten the facilities back online — often installing newer machines that can enrich uranium at a far more rapid pace. When a plant that made key centrifuge parts suffered what looked like a crippling explosion in late spring — destroying much of the parts inventory and the cameras and sensors installed by international inspectors — production resumed by late summer.</p> <p>One senior American official wryly called it Tehran's Build Back Better plan.</p> <p>That punch and counterpunch are only part of the escalation in recent months between Iran and the West, a confrontation that is about to come to a head, once again, in Vienna. For the first time since <a href="#">President Ebrahim Raisi took office</a> this summer, Iranian negotiators plan to meet with their European, Chinese and Russian counterparts at the end of the month to discuss the future of the 2015 nuclear agreement that sharply limited Iran's activities.</p>

American officials have warned their Israeli counterparts that the repeated attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities may be tactically satisfying, but they are ultimately counterproductive, according to several officials familiar with the behind-the-scenes discussions. Israeli officials have said they have no intention of letting up, waving away warnings that they may only be encouraging a sped-up rebuilding of the program — one of many areas in which the United States and Israel disagree on the benefits of using diplomacy rather than force.

At the Vienna meeting, American officials will be in the city but not inside the room — because Iran will not meet with them after President Donald J. Trump pulled out of the accord more than three years ago, leaving the deal in tatters. While five months ago those officials seemed optimistic that the 2015 deal was about to be restored, with the text largely agreed upon, they return to Vienna far more pessimistic than when they last left it, in mid-June. Today that text looks dead, and President Biden's vision of re-entering the agreement in his first year, then building something "longer and stronger," appears all but gone.

It is a sign of the changed mood that Ali Bagheri Kani, Iran's newly appointed chief nuclear negotiator, does not refer to the upcoming talks as nuclear negotiations at all. Mr. Bagheri Kani, a deputy foreign minister, said in Paris last week that "we have no such thing as nuclear negotiations." Instead, he refers to them as "negotiations to remove unlawful and inhuman sanctions." Iran says it will insist on the lifting of both nuclear and non-nuclear sanctions, and that it needs a guarantee that no future president could unilaterally abandon the agreement, as Mr. Trump did. Biden administration officials say the president would never make such a commitment.

Iran, as always, denies that it has any intention of ever building a nuclear weapon. But the more likely scenario is that it wants a "threshold capability" — one that would leave it able to produce a weapon in weeks or months, if it felt the need.

Publicly, the United States is hinting that if Iran stonewalls in Vienna, it may have to consider new sanctions.

Robert Malley, the State Department's Iran envoy, said recently that while "it is in Iran's hands to choose" which path to take, the United States and other allies need to be prepared for whichever choice Tehran makes.

He noted that Mr. Biden and Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken "have both said if diplomacy fails, we have other tools — and we will use other tools to prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon."

But inside the White House, there has been a scramble in recent days to explore whether some kind of interim deal might be possible to freeze Iran's production of more enriched uranium and its conversion of that fuel to metallic form — a necessary step in fabricating a warhead. In return, the United States might ease a limited number of sanctions. That would not solve the problem. But it might buy time for negotiations, while holding off Israeli threats to bomb Iranian facilities.

Buying time, perhaps lots of it, may prove essential. Many of Mr. Biden's advisers are doubtful that introducing new sanctions on Iran's leadership, its military or its oil trade — atop the 1,500 Mr. Trump imposed — would be any more successful than past efforts to pressure Iran to change course.

And more aggressive steps that were successful years ago may not yield the kind of results they have in mind. Inside the National Security Agency and U.S. Cyber Command, there is consensus that it is much harder now to pull off the kind of cyberattack that the United States and Israel conducted more than a decade ago, when [a secret operation, code-named "Olympic Games," crippled centrifuges](#) at the Natanz nuclear enrichment site [for more than a year](#).

Current and former American and Israeli officials note that the Iranians have since improved their defenses and built their own cyberforces, which the administration [warned last week were increasingly active inside the United States](#).



The Iranians have also continued to bar inspectors from key sites, despite a series of agreements with Rafael M. Grossi, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nations' watchdog, to preserve data from the agency's sensors at key locations. The inspectors' cameras and sensors that were destroyed in the plant explosion in late spring have not been replaced.

"From my perspective, what counts is the inspections that you have in place," Mr. Grossi said in a recent interview in Washington, where he spent a week talking with American officials and warning them that his agency was slowly "going blind" in Iran. He is scheduled to arrive in Tehran on Monday, in a last-ditch effort to revive monitoring and inspections before the agency's board of governors meets this week.

The inspection gap is particularly worrisome because the Iranians are declaring that they have now produced roughly 55 pounds of uranium enriched to 60 percent purity. That purity is below the 90 percent normally used to produce a weapon, but not by much. It is a level "that only countries making bombs have," Mr. Grossi said. "That doesn't mean that Iran is doing that. But it means that it is very high."

And while Iranian officials have given many explanations for why they are taking the step — for example, to fuel naval nuclear reactors, which Iran does not possess — the real reason seems to be to build pressure. This month, the spokesman for Iran's atomic energy agency, Behrouz Kamalvandi, noted with pride that only countries with nuclear weapons have shown that they can enrich uranium to this level. (He is wrong: Several non-nuclear states have done so.)

"In this organization now, if we have the will, we can do anything," he said.

Before Mr. Trump decided to scrap the deal, Iran had adhered to the limits of the 2015 agreement — which by most estimates kept it about a year from "breakout," the point where it has enough material for a bomb. While estimates vary, [that buffer is now down to somewhere between three weeks and a few months](#), which would change the geopolitical calculation throughout the Middle East.

When Mr. Biden took office, several of his top aides had high hopes that the original deal — parts of which they had negotiated — could be revived. At that time, the Iranians who had agreed to the accord were still in place: Iran's president, Hassan Rouhani, and his foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, remained in office, even if their power was greatly diminished.

But the administration spent two months determining how to approach a negotiation, and European officials complain that, in retrospect, that lost time proved damaging.

It was only at the end of March that the two sides agreed to return to the table; the Vienna talks began in early April.

By June, an agreement "was largely complete," one senior administration official said. Then it became clear that Iran was stalling until its presidential elections, which brought in Mr. Raisi, a hard-line former head of the judiciary.

Initially, American officials hoped Mr. Raisi would just take the agreement that had been negotiated, make minor alterations and celebrate a lifting of most Western sanctions. Anything that went wrong, they calculated, the new president could blame on the former president and foreign minister.

But that proved a miscalculation. In late September, the country's new foreign minister, Hossain Amirabdollahian, told The New York Times that he had no interest in conducting the kind of detailed negotiation that his predecessor had worked on for years.

The spokesman for Iran's foreign ministry, Saeed Khatibzadeh, said at a recent news conference that Iran had three conditions for Washington to return to the deal: It must admit to wrongdoing in pulling out of the deal, it must lift all sanctions at once, and it must offer a guarantee that no other administration will exit the deal as Trump did.



“It is absolutely impossible for Iran to give the level of concession to the U.S. that Rouhani’s government gave,” said Gheis Ghoreishi, a foreign policy adviser close to Iran’s government. “We are not going to give all our cards and then wait around to see if the U.S. or E.U. are going to be committed to the deal or not; this is no way going to happen.”

While European officials say they do not want to consider a “Plan B” if a standoff develops, a variety of such plans — ranging from economic isolation to sabotage — have been the regular subject of meetings at the White House, the Pentagon and the State Department. Asked about the Plan B discussions at a news conference more than two weeks ago, Mr. Biden paused a moment, then said, “I’m not going to comment on Iran now.”

But the Israelis are commenting. This month Israel’s army chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Aviv Kochavi, said the Israeli military was “speeding up the operational plans and readiness for dealing with Iran and the nuclear military threat.” It was a reference to the fact that the new prime minister, Naftali Bennett, has authorized more funding for planning and practicing attacks. Israeli officials insist they have developed a bunker-busting capability that obviates the need for the kind of help they sought from the Bush administration 13 years ago. Whether that is true or a bluff remains unclear.

At some point, Biden administration officials say they may be forced to declare that Iran’s nuclear program is simply too advanced for anyone to safely return to the 2015 agreement. “This is not a chronological clock; it’s a technological clock,” Mr. Malley said in a briefing last month. “At some point,” he added, the agreement “will have been so eroded because Iran will have made advances that cannot be reversed.”

He added: “You can’t revive a dead corpse.”

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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Rittenhouse acquittal invigorates vigilantes</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/21/us/rittenhouse-militia-paramilitary.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/21/us/rittenhouse-militia-paramilitary.html</a>
GIST	<p>On Friday, as Kyle Rittenhouse stood in a courtroom in Kenosha, Wis., awaiting the verdict in his trial, a large bald man with mutton chop sideburns sat in a pew several rows behind him. As a court clerk announced Mr. Rittenhouse’s acquittal on all charges, a faint smile passed across the man’s lips.</p> <p>“I’m walking on sunshine,” the man, Kevin Mathewson, said the next day. A local private investigator and former city alderman, he had attended every day of the trial, in which he had more than a passing interest.</p> <p>Mr. Mathewson had become a prominent and divisive figure in Kenosha. Days after George Floyd was killed by a police officer in Minneapolis, Mr. Mathewson had created an organization called the Kenosha Guard, an armed group that declared its intent in a Facebook post “to deter rioting/looting” amid racial justice demonstrations in Kenosha. In August 2020, after the police shooting of a Black man named Jacob Blake brought a wave of protests and rioting to the city, Mr. Mathewson had written on the Guard’s Facebook page urging Kenoshans to take to the streets with guns to defend the city. His Aug. 25 post went viral, drawing thousands of RSVPs and comments threatening violence.</p> <p>Mr. Mathewson’s call to arms was one of several in Kenosha that day, which collectively brought dozens of mostly white armed paramilitaries into the streets of the city’s small downtown, creating a heavily armed confrontation with demonstrators that came to a head with the Rittenhouse shootings. Mr. Mathewson went home hours before the shootings, and no evidence ever connected Mr. Rittenhouse — whom Mr. Mathewson said he had never met — to his Facebook post. But his proximity to the incident led to him being banned from Facebook, where his Aug. 25 post had been flagged repeatedly for violating the platform’s ban on militia activity and had left an aura of suspicion around him.</p> <p>Now that Mr. Rittenhouse had been acquitted, Mr. Mathewson felt cleared by association. “It vindicates Kyle,” Mr. Mathewson said. “I felt vindicated by it.” And, he went on, “It vindicates people that say, ‘Look, no one’s coming to help, we have to help ourselves.’”</p>

The Rittenhouse shootings, and [the clash between paramilitaries and demonstrators in which they occurred](#), represented the lethal culmination of this idea: that the United States had reached a point of crisis in which citizens were required to take up arms to defend it from their fellow citizens. It was an idea with deep roots in American history, and also one deeply entangled with the country's legacy of racial conflict.

White vigilante groups, some of them openly white supremacist, responded violently to unrest in Black communities in multiple cities in the late 1960s, often with the acquiescence or active support of local police. Photographs of armed Korean American business owners in Los Angeles defending their properties during the 1992 riots have been touchstones for Second Amendment advocates for years, and they were circulated again as social media memes after the Rittenhouse verdict.

In 2020, this strain of armed vigilantism was reactivated by the struggles of mostly Democratic state and local governments and law enforcement in responding to rioting and prolonged unrest in several major cities after Mr. Floyd's death. And it was fanned by conservative media figures and Republican politicians, who encouraged their audiences and supporters to see the failure to preserve order as part and parcel of the Democratic agenda.

"I'm really concerned about the gun fetish, and those who really buy into the 'good guy with a gun' scenario," Anthony Kennedy, an alderman in Kenosha, said after the verdict. "Those people who see the breakdown of society, think they need to be armed — this just validates their worldview. And that's bad for all of us."

Mr. Rittenhouse's trial was an important test of how the legal system would address one of the signature developments that emerged amid the violent fracturing of American politics in 2020: the presence of armed counterprotesters at racial justice demonstrations, both peaceful and otherwise. In some cases, the armed groups and individuals were openly opposed to, and antagonistic toward, demonstrators. In others, they presented themselves as a volunteer security presence for private or government buildings, or even as neutral peacekeepers, though they were rarely welcomed as such by demonstrators.

Their actions were not without precedent. Members of the Oath Keepers militia were present in Ferguson, Mo., after the police shooting of Michael Brown there in 2014. Elizabeth Neumann, a former assistant secretary for counterterrorism and threat prevention at the Department of Homeland Security, where she tracked domestic extremism, argued that such groups represented a particularly elusive kind of security threat, in part because the armed groups themselves did not necessarily see themselves that way.

"An Oath Keeper, they see themselves as being there for protecting," she said. Their mind-set, she added, is that "they're there in case there's a bad day — and if the government keeps violating our rights, there might come a day when they need to launch a revolution."

The armed groups that materialized in Kenosha appeared to span a range of motivations. Some were highly ideological, including members of the anarchic far-right Boogaloo movement, who could be seen in footage from several nights placing themselves between demonstrators and the police and guarding private property. Others saw themselves as simply defending local businesses or providing a sort of heavily armed neighborhood watch in the absence of an overstretched police department.

Doug Flucke, who stood watch as part of a group outside a restaurant in another part of Kenosha the night of the Rittenhouse shootings, said in a Facebook message last month that his group was "ready to help and stand next to our Blue to show them that they had support from their community and they weren't alone."

Prominent media and political personalities on the right in Wisconsin and elsewhere had discussed throughout the summer the need for this kind of community-level response to what they depicted as Democratic failure in the face of rioting. Appearing on a talk radio program the day after the Rittenhouse shootings, David Clarke, the former Milwaukee County sheriff and a right-wing political celebrity, said

that he did not advocate “some of the stuff that’s starting to happen” but that he would not condemn it either, and he advised listeners to have a plausible argument for their actions in such cases.

“Think about it, have a plan,” he said. “You have to act reasonably. Then you’re going to have to articulate what you did afterwards.” After the Rittenhouse verdict on Friday, Mr. Clarke [told Newsmax](#) that he had to “hold back tears” after the verdict was read. “I’ve talked to this young man,” he said. “He’s been under a lot.”

A [2013 Urban Institute study](#) found marked disparities in how often homicides were deemed justifiable by juries based on the race of the parties involved. And “stand your ground” laws, which codify a particularly expansive right to self-defense, have played a role in the acquittal of defendants accused of killing Black people who were unarmed in several high-profile cases, most notably in [George Zimmerman’s shooting of Trayvon Martin](#), a Black teenager, in 2012. Three white men currently on trial in Georgia for the murder of Ahmaud Arbery — a 25-year-old Black man who was unarmed, and whom the men pursued through their neighborhood — have [similarly claimed self-defense](#).

Mr. Rittenhouse’s detractors rushed to cast his acquittal as part of this pattern. “This system isn’t built to hold white supremacists accountable,” Representative Cori Bush of Missouri, a Black Lives Matter activist elected to Congress as a Democrat last year, wrote on Twitter shortly after the decision.

But the Rittenhouse shootings, though they happened after he brought an assault-style rifle to the aftermath of a racial justice protest, diverged in significant ways from that template. The three men Mr. Rittenhouse shot, two of them fatally, were all white, and the shootings occurred in a genuinely chaotic and violent situation, with deadly weapons present on all sides.

His acquittal was considered a likely outcome by legal analysts, who had regarded the prosecution’s path to conviction on homicide charges as exceptionally steep because it would have required demonstrating beyond reasonable doubt that Mr. Rittenhouse had not acted in self-defense. “I think this is not a terribly surprising verdict,” Michael M. O’Hear, a professor at Marquette University Law School in Milwaukee, said.

“I don’t think the kid was a Klan member,” Raymond Roberts, a local data analyst and activist, said of Mr. Rittenhouse. “It was just the privilege of it: ‘Because I’m white, I can walk around in tac gear with a rifle, and the police will say thank you.’”

In June 2020, Mr. Roberts, who is Black and an Army veteran, had organized an armed demonstration to counter Mr. Mathewson’s Kenosha Guard, calling on fellow veterans to openly carry firearms in solidarity with racial justice demonstrators. But at the event, Mr. Roberts had chosen to carry a permitted concealed handgun rather than a rifle — a common choice among local racial justice activists who armed themselves at demonstrations in Kenosha that summer.

To Mr. Roberts, the Rittenhouse verdict was a stark reminder of who was likely to be seen by the police and jury members as “helping” in a situation like the one Mr. Rittenhouse placed himself in, and who was not. “I have to be honest and say I’m angry because I’m jealous,” he said.

“That 17-year-old white boy, this country belongs to him more than it’ll ever belong to me. It doesn’t matter how many years I did in the Army, how much taxes I pay. I can’t do what he did. I can’t walk around in the middle of the night open carrying,” Mr. Roberts said.

Mr. Kennedy, the alderman, who is also Black and an Army veteran, agreed. If he had been in Mr. Rittenhouse’s situation, “My ass would’ve been dead on the street,” he said. “I wouldn’t have been arrested.”

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HEADLINE	11/21 Immigration deportation orders plummet
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/21/deportation-orders-immigration-judges-plummet-unde/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/21/deportation-orders-immigration-judges-plummet-unde/</a>

## GIST

The Biden administration's more lenient approach to illegal immigration is now showing up in the nation's immigration courts, where over the final three months of the last fiscal year, judges issued deportation directives in less than a third of cases.

That's down dramatically compared to 2019 and 2020, under the Trump administration, when 80% of cases resulted in either removal orders or grants of voluntary departure.

Department officials said the numbers are the result of the administration's push to expand the reach of "prosecutorial discretion," cutting thousands of migrants loose, even though judges did not rule in their favor. Instead, cooperation between Homeland Security's lawyers and the migrants has resulted in record rates of cases being dismissed or terminated, which amounts to a tacit OK for those migrants to remain illegally in the country.

The more relaxed approach comes even as a border surge has meant about half a million migrants were caught and released by Homeland Security over the last year. Yet the immigration courts issued only about 40,000 or so deportation orders.

Experts said that mismatch is particularly troubling because it could help entice others to make the illegal journey, figuring they'll take their chances with the immigration courts.

One source within the department, who has tracked developments but was not authorized to speak publicly about them, said it appeared the new team was "pushing to break the immigration court system."

As part of the Justice Department's Executive Office of Immigration Review (EOIR), the immigration courts are the usually unseen backbone of the nation's immigration consequences delivery system. Immigrants without documentation who aren't immediately ousted come to the courts for hearings, and the judges render decisions that give teeth to U.S. immigration law.

Cases are prosecuted by lawyers at Homeland Security's deportation agency, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Changing patterns of illegal immigration over the last decade have put new strains on both ICE and EOIR. The immigration courts ended fiscal year 2021, on Sept. 30, with 1.4 million pending cases, by far the record.

And even as the workload grew, judges completed just 115,000 cases in the fiscal year, the lowest figure in more than 25 years. Some of that is because of the coronavirus pandemic, "but not all of it," a department official said. The official said there's been a "complete de-emphasis" on actually completing cases.

"That level of dysfunction is unprecedented at any government agency and should warrant an official investigation," the official said.

There are also a couple hundred thousand cases that appear to be missing from EOIR's docket. While about half a million border jumpers were caught and released or transferred by Customs and Border Protection over fiscal year 2021, the immigration courts registered only about 250,000 new cases.

EOIR, in a statement to The Washington Times, said its records reflect the cases, known in government-speak as "Notices to Appear" or NTAs, that Homeland Security has actually filed with the courts. There are "a variety of reasons" why Homeland Security would hold on to the records, EOIR said.

At some point, those NTAs should be registered with EOIR. But for now, that means as bad as EOIR's numbers seem to be, the reality is even worse, with hundreds of thousands of additional cases that will be added to the agency's workload once Homeland Security submits them.

“There’s something funny going on there but I can’t put my finger on what exactly it is,” said a second Justice Department source.

Andrew R. “Art” Arthur, a former immigration judge and now resident fellow in law and policy at the Center for Immigration Studies, said he anticipates the Biden administration will respond to that crush of cases by scrapping some cases.

“They’re just going to ditch some cases, they’re just going to focus on the core ones,” Mr. Arthur told The Times. “People who were caught before 2020, a lot of those cases are just going to fall by the wayside.”

He said the government would need to go on a crash course of hiring for new immigration judges just to tread water with that future workload.

Yet EOIR just completed its slowest hiring year since 2017. And the judges aren’t doing much work anymore.

The agency ended last fiscal year with 559 judges, who completed 114,751 cases, or slightly more than 200 per judge. By contrast, two years earlier, 442 judges completed 276,993 cases, or more than 600 per judge.

The Biden administration last month announced it was canceling a caseload target imposed by the Trump administration.

EOIR told The Times in its statement that it is trying to get more judges in the pipeline, with 19 to be added to the ranks this week and to be fully invested next month, once they complete new judge training.

“There are many variables that affect the immigration judge hiring process and it is not unusual for immigration judge hiring rates to fluctuate from year to year,” the agency said.

EOIR is authorized for 634 immigration judges, and the Biden administration has asked Congress to approve money to hire another 100 judges in its 2022 budget.

Overall, the Biden administration’s approach to EOIR has been to try to expunge as much of the Trump legacy as possible.

The agency’s director, a career official, was ousted, and Attorney General Merrick Garland overturned several immigration rulings made by the Trump Justice Department intended to limit iffy asylum claims. Immigrant-rights groups argued valid claims were also being blocked by the Trump-era changes.

And over the summer, ICE issued new guidance urging prosecutors to look for reasons to drop cases.

The results are just beginning to be seen, department sources said.

Of the NTA cases where EOIR rendered initial decisions in 2019 and 2020, judges ordered issued a deportation directive about 80% of the time. In 2021, that dropped to about 40%. For the final three months, when Biden policies were most firmly entrenched, the rate was just 32%.

Cases granted, where the migrant wins his or her claim, have risen slightly. But the real change has been on terminations or dismissals — effectively dropping proceedings and giving a tacit OK for the migrant to remain. Those decisions rose from about 8% in 2019 and 2020 to 42% in the just-ended fiscal year.

Cases that were terminated or dismissed are usually relatively weak, Mr. Arthur said. Otherwise, if the migrants had a strong case, they would insist on their asylum claim fully adjudicated because winning asylum brings a permanent legal status and the eventual chance at citizenship. A termination or dismissal doesn’t bring a permanent legal status, though many will be able to apply for work permits.

	<p>EOIR, in its statement to The Times, said it's not focused on the ratio of deportation orders.</p> <p>"In the exercise of justice, our adjudicators decide each case, including motions to terminate or dismiss, and requests for voluntary departure, on its merits and in accordance with U.S. immigration law, regulations and precedent decisions, without consideration of how those outcomes feed into aggregate data including the ratio you mention," the agency said.</p> <p>The American Immigration Lawyers Association counters has cheered the rising dismissals, saying they often represent cases where those facing deportation had a valid claim to make before a different agency, such as the State Department or U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.</p> <p>A rising rate of dismissals and terminations is part of a "common-sense" approach to setting priorities for enforcement, AILA says.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Military personnel seek religious exemption</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/21/system-strained-military-personnel-seek-religious/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/21/system-strained-military-personnel-seek-religious/</a>
GIST	<p>The military's system of implementing a COVID-19 vaccination order for all those in the ranks is facing unprecedented stress as a historic number of soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines say their faith should allow them to skip getting the shot.</p> <p>The result so far has been a massive logistical headache for Pentagon leaders and an unenviable task for the chaplains who find themselves in the crosshairs. It's a dilemma that shows no signs of easing as the services' vaccine deadlines come and go.</p> <p>With the Defense Department mounting an aggressive push to get service members vaccinated and force out those who refuse, sources across military branches said the sheer volume of faith-related exemption applications is unlike anything seen before.</p> <p>Exact figures for most of the military services won't be released publicly for another several weeks, but the few numbers available so far paint a behind-the-scenes picture of a system not designed to handle such a huge influx of waiver requests in a relatively short period of time.</p> <p>Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and senior service heads say the vaccine mandate is a readiness issue, needed to protect those who serve and prevent COVID-19 outbreaks from sidelining troops or cutting short deployments and naval missions. But as in the civilian world, vaccine skeptics are proving hard to win over, even in the face of a direct order.</p> <p>"They don't have the resources to handle this in a serious manner," said Sean Timmons, a Houston attorney who said his firm, Tully Rinckey PLLC, represents more than 100 military personnel seeking COVID-19 exemptions, most of them on religious grounds.</p> <p>"It's a giant mess," Mr. Timmons told The Washington Times. "Nobody knows what's going on. It's been a complete and utter disaster every step of the way."</p> <p>Pentagon officials vehemently disagree with that characterization and stress that each service member who seeks a religious waiver from the federally mandated coronavirus vaccine is given a fair hearing and ample opportunity to explain their objection.</p> <p>But it's clear that the system of tracking, processing and rendering a decision on those exemption requests has never faced a test like this. The frantic push to get military personnel vaccinated, combined with vaccine skepticism and the political questions about how far the federal government can go to force immunizations, has created a record number of service members seeking a way around the mandate.</p> <p>The strain on the system seems clear.</p>

In the Air Force, for example, sources told The Washington Times that service members and civilians are working longer hours and some are being pulled from other duties in order to assist with the organization and review of thousands of religious waiver requests. At least 4,933 airmen have filed waiver applications from COVID-19 vaccines on religious grounds — a figure that one official described as “by far” the most in history.

As of Nov. 3, none had been approved. The deadline to approve or deny those requests is Dec. 2, just over a week away.

The Navy hasn’t yet released data on how many sailors are seeking religious exemptions, but officials concede the number is higher than in years past when few requests were filed and even fewer were approved.

Over the past four years, for example, Navy officials said just 24 sailors sought religious exemptions from required immunizations. None of those exemption applications were approved.

The coronavirus-related figure in the Navy is expected to be much higher. The service will release the official number once its Nov. 28 mandatory vaccine deadline passes.

Ahead of its own Dec. 15 vaccination deadline for active-duty soldiers, the Army also is dealing with an influx of requests, though officials wouldn’t discuss specific figures.

“The Army’s religious accommodation process related to medical care is not new. While the scale of religious exemption requests related to the COVID-19 vaccine mandate may become higher in volume than previous requests, the Army will continue to handle all religious accommodation requests pursuant to established Department of Defense and Army policy,” Army spokesperson Heather J. Hagan told The Times.

And refusal has real consequences: Army Secretary Christine Wormuth, in a memorandum signed last week, said active-duty soldiers and those in the Army reserves and National Guard who don’t get the vaccine and don’t get a religious or medical exemption will be “flagged,” meaning they can’t be promoted, can’t reenlist and can’t get new payments on their promised enlistment bonuses.

The Marine Corps vaccination deadline is Nov. 28. After that date, the service will release figures on how many Marines sought religious exemptions.

“The Marine Corps’ process for evaluating requests for religious accommodation that require an exception to policy — grooming standards or vaccines — follows a rigorous approach to ensure Marines receive due consideration,” a Marine Corps spokesperson told The Times. “The process begins with an interview at Marine’s unit with the chaplain and an endorsement by the first general officer in the chain of command. The request is forwarded to Manpower and Reserve Affairs where it is evaluated by a three-member Religious Accommodation Review Board as well as by health services and legal.”

### **Personal questions**

While the specific process for handling requests differs across each service, they all rely on a similar format. Service members consult with their commanders and make an official request before moving on to the key step in the process: sit-down conversations with military chaplains. Those chaplains are a key cog in the process, though the sensitive and potentially intimate matters of faith they discuss behind closed doors with service members remain private.

The Arlington-based Military Chaplains Association, whose membership includes current and former armed forces chaplains, did not respond to requests for comment from The Times seeking information on the interview process.



While the specifics vary depending on an individual service member's faith and specific objection to a vaccine, chaplains have general guidelines to follow.

In the Navy, for example, the service's 2020 guidance for handling exemption requests includes a "chaplain interview checklist template" to help with the determination of whether a sailor's religious beliefs "seemed honestly and sincerely held."

Among the factors chaplains are to consider: If the requestor was credible; whether their "demeanor and pattern of conduct" are consistent; if they attend a house of worship or otherwise participate in "activities" associated with their belief; whether there are other persons who support their claims; and letters or other documentation from an organization espousing their beliefs.

If a chaplain signs off on the request — an outcome that appears to be rare, based on past figures and interviews with officials across military services — it then moves up the chain to uniformed leaders.

Officials stressed, however, that just because a chaplain endorses a faith-based exemption request does not necessarily mean it is approved. Military commanders then must weigh that request against other factors, such as whether granting the waiver could harm good order and discipline in the unit or, in the case of COVID-19, could lead directly to potential health risks for fellow service members.

Mr. Timmons, the Houston attorney, said his clients have described the process as "invasive" and "uncomfortable." Chaplains, he added, understand the Pentagon is looking to grant as few waivers as possible.

Again, defense officials push back hard against that argument and say that every service member is given a full and fair hearing.

But there's little doubt that deeply personal questions are at play.

"How often do you go to church? How often do you pray? How long have you been practicing your religion?" Mr. Timmons said, citing the questions he says clients have been asked. "That's private. That's something you keep to yourself unless you're talking to someone you know on an intimate level."

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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Official: time running short to prevent surge</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/21/us-covid-cases-thanksgiving-fauci">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/21/us-covid-cases-thanksgiving-fauci</a>
GIST	<p>The US government's chief medical adviser Dr Anthony Fauci warned on Sunday that time was running short to prevent a "dangerous" new surge of Covid-19 infections from overwhelming the upcoming holiday season.</p> <p>Coronavirus cases across the US are <a href="#">rising again for the first time in weeks</a>, and approaching 100,000 per day. Experts fear that this week's Thanksgiving holiday, for which tens of millions of Americans will travel for indoor celebrations with family and friends, will fuel a further surge.</p> <p>Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said it was not too late to avoid a significant worsening of Covid-19 rates leading up to Christmas and New Year if the public acted now on new measures to subdue the virus, such as Friday's <a href="#">approval of booster shots</a> for adults and the recent opening up of <a href="#">vaccinations to children</a> aged five to 11.</p> <p>"We still have about 60 million people in this country who are eligible to be vaccinated who have not been, and that results in the dynamic of virus in the community that not only is dangerous and makes people who are unvaccinated vulnerable, but it also spills over into the vaccinated people," Fauci said on CNN's State of the Union on Sunday.</p>

“We have a lot of virus circulating around. You can’t walk away from the data, and the data show that the cases are starting to go up, which is not unexpected when you get into a winter season. People start to go indoors more and we know that immunity does wane over time.

“The bottom line is get vaccinated if you’re not vaccinated, and boosted if you have been vaccinated. Since we can vaccinate children from five to 11, you start vaccinating them now [and] they will be fully vaccinated by the time we get to the Christmas holidays.”

The numbers of Americans traveling for [Thanksgiving](#) this year will be close to pre-pandemic levels, the federal Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has predicted, raising fears at a time when the Biden administration has struggled to get its vaccination message across.

The daily average of new cases has risen 29% in the last 14 days, [analysis by the New York Times](#) shows, while fewer than 60% of those eligible are fully vaccinated. Meanwhile, the 2021 US [death toll from Covid has surpassed that of 2020](#), according to the Wall Street Journal.

Additionally, Joe Biden’s efforts to improve those figures through compulsory vaccination have stalled. The requirement for businesses of more than 100 employees remains [blocked by the courts](#) while Republican leaders in some states have kneecapped the president by enacting laws specifically outlawing such mandates.

Disney, one of Florida’s biggest employers, [announced on Saturday](#) it would no longer insist cast members be vaccinated, after the governor, Ron DeSantis, [signed sweeping legislation](#) on Thursday countermanning Biden’s order. In a move that many saw as infantile, DeSantis chose the unincorporated [Florida community of Brandon](#) for the signing – “[Let’s Go Brandon](#)” has become an offensive anti-Biden rallying call of the right in recent weeks.

In a later appearance Sunday on ABC’s This Week, Fauci was cautious over suggestions by vaccine manufacturers that [annual boosters might be necessary](#) to keep Covid-19 at bay.

“We would hope, and this is something that we’re looking at very carefully, that that third shot with the mRNA [vaccine] not only boosts you way up, but increases the durability so that you will not necessarily need it every six months, or a year,” he said.

“We’re hoping it pushes it out more. If it doesn’t and the data show we do need it more often then we’ll do it.”

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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Modeling: some Pacific vax will take years</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/21/some-pacific-countries-will-take-years-to-vaccinate-50-of-adult-population-modelling-shows">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/21/some-pacific-countries-will-take-years-to-vaccinate-50-of-adult-population-modelling-shows</a>
GIST	<p>Some Pacific countries will have less than a quarter of adults vaccinated by the end of the year, with predictions that <a href="#">Papua New Guinea</a> will take five years to vaccinate just one-third of its population, undermining economic recovery and threatening huge loss of life across the region.</p> <p>The predictions come from modelling released on Sunday by the Lowy Institute, which takes into account factors including access to vaccines, numbers of healthcare workers, urbanisation, topography and vaccine hesitancy to estimate when Pacific countries will hit key vaccine milestones.</p> <p>The modelling reveals a divided region. Papua New Guinea, which is in the midst of a devastating Delta outbreak, currently has around 3% of its adult population vaccinated.</p> <p>Solomon Islands is predicted to have just 23% of its adult population vaccinated by the end of the year, with Vanuatu predicted to have just 29% of adults fully vaccinated.</p>

“Looking at what was happening in PNG and the rest of Melanesia shocked me a little bit,” said Alexandre Dayant, the lead author of the model. “According to our model, PNG wouldn’t get to more than 36% of its adult population by August 2026. This is very concerning. It raises a big question: what will happen to countries that are not getting fully vaccinated in the future. Are they going to be the pariahs of this world?”

However, many smaller Pacific nations reached almost 100% vaccine coverage months ago, supported by partner nations such as the US, Australia and New Zealand.

Palau, in the north Pacific, has one of the highest vaccination rates in the world, with more than 99% of its adult population fully vaccinated. The country of nearly 20,000 people is now rolling out booster shots. Similarly, Nauru, Niue, Cook Islands and Tuvalu have close to 100% of their adult populations fully vaccinated.

The research also looked at supply of vaccines to the region from donor countries. Australia has committed to provide 11.4m doses – 66% of the region’s supply – with Covax committing 4.5m doses, followed by New Zealand, China, the US and India.

“The issue is not vaccine supply, it’s vaccine demand,” said Dayant. “One of the biggest reasons for vaccine hesitancy is misinformation.

“Misinformation spread much faster than the virus in the Pacific. One of the big issues in the Pacific is that social media is a key source of information ... This undermines the effort that the international community is making to inject the vaccine into people’s arms.”

However, Dayant said that messaging in Australia around the safety of the AstraZeneca vaccine, and the fact that huge quantities of it were donated to Papua New Guinea even as health officials cautioned against its use in those under the age of 60 in Australia, undermined confidence in the vaccine in Pacific countries.

“Some of them were saying: ‘Hold on, if it’s not good enough for Australian people, why should we take it?’”

Many Pacific countries have remained largely Covid-free throughout the pandemic by keeping their borders closed to international arrivals, something that has come at enormous economic cost to tourism-dependent economies.

Fiji, one of the largest and most developed Pacific countries, had a very serious Delta outbreak in the middle of 2021, recording more than 50,000 cases in a country of just under 1 million people, and nearly 700 deaths.

Just 8% of Fijian adults were fully vaccinated in June 2021, when the outbreak began, but an ambitious vaccine rollout program, and a controversial “no jab, no job” policy, saw vaccination rates skyrocket. As of Friday, 90% of adults in Fiji were fully immunised and more than 97% of adults had received at least one dose. [The country plans to reopen quarantine-free travel](#) to tourists from some countries, including Australia, in December.

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HEADLINE	11/21 Guns become more common on US streets
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/kenosha-guns-common-us-streets-81317462">https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/kenosha-guns-common-us-streets-81317462</a>
GIST	<p>As Kyle Rittenhouse was acquitted in two killings that he said were self-defense, armed civilians patrolled the streets near the Wisconsin courthouse with guns in plain view.</p> <p>In Georgia, testimony in the trial of Ahmaud Arbery’s killers showed that armed patrols were commonplace in the neighborhood where Arbery, a 25-year-old Black man, was chased down by three white men and shot.</p>

The two proceedings sent startling new signals about the boundaries of self-defense as more guns emerge from homes amid political and racial tensions and the advance of laws that ease permitting requirements and expand the allowable use of force.

Across much of the nation, it has become increasingly acceptable for Americans to walk the streets with firearms, either carried openly or legally concealed. In places that still forbid such behavior, prohibitions on possessing guns in public could soon change if the U.S. Supreme Court strikes down a New York law.

The new status quo for firearms outside the home was on prominent display last week in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Local resident Erick Jordan carried a rifle and holstered handgun near the courthouse where Rittenhouse was tried for killing two men and wounding a third with an AR-15-style semiautomatic rifle during a protest last year.

“I got a job to do — protect these people. That’s it,” said Jordan, referring to speakers at a news conference that was held in the hours after the verdict.

Speakers included an uncle of Jacob Blake, the Black man who was paralyzed in a shooting by a white police officer that touched off tumultuous protests across the city in the summer of 2020.

“This is my town, my people,” Jordan said. “We don’t agree on a lot of things, but we fight, we argue, we agree to disagree and go home safe, alive.”

“That’s real self-defense.”

The comments were a counter punch to political figures on the right who welcomed the Rittenhouse verdict and condemned his prosecution.

Mark McCloskey, who pleaded guilty in June to misdemeanor charges stemming from when he and his wife waved a rifle and a handgun at Black Lives Matter protesters outside their St. Louis home in 2020, said the verdict shows that people have a right to defend themselves from a “mob.” He currently is a Republican candidate for U.S. Senate in Missouri.

The verdict arrived as many states are expanding self-defense laws and loosening the rules for carrying guns in public. Both gun sales and gun violence have been on the rise.

At the same time, six more states this year removed requirements to get a permit to carry guns in public, the largest number in any single year, according to the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence. In all, 30 states have enacted “stand your ground” laws, which remove a requirement to retreat from confrontations before using deadly force.

Wisconsin has a tougher standard for claiming self-defense, and Rittenhouse was able to show the jury that he reasonably believed his life was in danger and that the amount of force he used was appropriate.

Ryan Busse, a former firearms-industry executive who now supports moderate gun control as an author and consultant, said the case reinforced the normalization of military-style weapons on city and suburban streets.

“Reasonable gun owners are freaked out by this,” he said. “How is it that we see this and people are just like, ‘There’s a guy with an AR-15.’ That happens in third-world countries.”

He highlighted that a lesser charge against Rittenhouse as a minor in possession of a dangerous weapon was dropped before the verdict.

“There’s a facet of Wisconsin law that allows kids to take their hunting rifle out with their dad or uncle,” Busse said. “Well he’s not hunting. ... The old gun culture is being used to cover up for this new, dangerous firearms culture.”

Gun-rights advocates seeking greater access to weapons and robust self-defense provisions argue that armed confrontations will remain rare.

Republicans including former President Donald Trump have been quick to applaud the verdict. They stand by Rittenhouse as a patriot who took a stand against lawlessness and exercised his Second Amendment rights.

Discord over the right to carry guns in public places spilled over into state legislatures in the aftermath of a 2020 plot to storm the Michigan Capitol, the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol and other threats. States including Michigan and New Mexico this year banned guns at their capitols, while Montana and Utah shored up concealed-carry rights.

At the Supreme Court, justices are weighing the biggest guns case in more than a decade, a dispute over whether New York's gun permitting law violates the Second Amendment right to "keep and bear arms."

Defenders of the law say that striking it down would lead to more guns on the streets of cities, including New York and Los Angeles.

During oral arguments this month, justices also appeared to worry that a broad ruling might threaten gun restrictions on subways and at bars, stadiums and other gathering places.

New York's law has been in place since 1913. It says that to carry a concealed handgun in public for self-defense, an applicant has to demonstrate an actual need for the weapon.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 King Co. prosecutor office deal ethics probe</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/king-county-prosecutor-dan-satterbergs-office-cut-deal-to-head-off-ethics-probe-into-nepotism-claims/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/king-county-prosecutor-dan-satterbergs-office-cut-deal-to-head-off-ethics-probe-into-nepotism-claims/</a>
GIST	<p>Early last year, a whistleblower alleged the adult children of two high-ranking officials in King County Prosecuting Attorney Dan Satterberg's office appeared to have unfairly received internships, jobs or other special treatment that broke county ethics rules.</p> <p>The <a href="#">nepotism complaint</a>, filed in January 2020, spurred the county's ombudsman to hire an outside attorney to investigate whether the son and daughter-in-law of Mark Larson, longtime chief of Satterberg's criminal division, and the stepson of his human resources director, Heidi Parkington-Thal, had improperly benefited.</p> <p>Satterberg's office <a href="#">denied the claims</a>. But after a monthslong investigation turned up nearly 1,500 pages of records, the office asked the ombuds to halt the probe and negotiate a settlement. In August, <a href="#">a never-before-used compromise called an "early resolution agreement"</a> was brought before the county's Board of Ethics for required approval.</p> <p>Under the deal, Satterberg's office acknowledged it had violated some ethics rules, mostly for failing to document measures his officials claimed they'd taken to ensure no preferential treatment was given. The office also drafted a new anti-nepotism policy and agreed to undertake officewide training. No employees faced discipline.</p> <p>But what wasn't shared with the ethics board before it approved the agreement were records uncovered by the investigation before it was stopped. <a href="#">The investigator's summary of those records</a>, obtained by The Seattle Times through a public records request, indicates favoritism in personnel matters, or the appearance of it, was more serious than what Satterberg's office had acknowledged.</p> <p>The summary showed Satterberg's office had awarded coveted paid internships in 2018 to his HR director's stepson, even though multiple other candidates had been recommended before him, and to an</p>

initially rejected applicant — the son of a former prominent employee — after a federal judge asked Satterberg to reconsider his candidacy.

It also revealed both Larson's son and Parkington-Thal's stepson had run-ins with the law while assigned to prosecute criminal cases, but neither appeared to face any serious professional consequences. In fact, the office moved the HR director's stepson into a specially created civil-division internship following his 2018 DUI arrest, then later made a [decision not to prosecute](#) him, the records show.

When recently provided a copy of the five-page summary, two ethics board members confirmed they had not seen it before the board approved the agreement. One member called its omission from the panel "troubling." Another said the agreement with Satterberg's office "let him off easy."

In an interview, Ombuds Amy Calderwood said the agreement properly addressed the complaint and met the public's interests, noting the investigation by then had cost taxpayers \$102,000.

She added some of what turned up in the records fell outside the ethics code's five-year statute of limitations or involved officials, including Satterberg, who weren't named subjects of the complaint. The ethics board also didn't ask to see the summary document and when presenting the agreement, her office followed code, she said.

"The language (in the code) isn't that they get to see everything," Calderwood said.

Satterberg separately disputed favoritism in his office, saying the interns and employees mentioned in the complaint were hired and advanced based on merit. He added he assumed the board was "given everything" before approving the settlement.

"They agreed to do it and I thought it was a reasonable thing to do," Satterberg said. "We've moved on. Whatever nepotism that was existing has been gone a long time."

#### **"Fairness"**

A senior deputy prosecutor, whose name is blacked out in public records, filed the [ethics complaint](#) on Jan. 15, 2020.

It contended that while Mark Larson oversaw Satterberg's criminal division, his son, Luke Larson, and daughter-in-law, Michelle Tri Larson, were hired as deputy prosecutors and supervised by those who reported directly to him, violating conflict-of-interest policies on nepotism. Larson's relatives also were later promoted to senior positions before he retired in December 2019, it said.

The complaint also claimed that Zach Thal, the stepson of Satterberg's HR director, Parkington-Thal, had received a paid internship in the civil division specially created for him by division chief Kevin Wright.

County ethics policies don't prohibit relatives from working in the same workplace. But they require measures to address "actual or apparent conflicts of interest," including [barring employees from influencing or participating](#), "directly or indirectly," in personnel decisions involving family members.

"This issue is not just about fairness in hiring, but the perception of fairness," the complaint said, adding all involved employees were white and their "positions and promotions should have been available to people of any race and without regard to their familial ties."

In separate interviews, Mark, Luke and Michelle Larson each said they recognize some people may have perceived favoritism was at play, but added they've tried to address such concerns in their own ways: Mark, by isolating himself from personnel matters; Luke and Michelle by hard work.

"I've earned everything that I've gotten," said Michelle Larson. "In reality, you can't survive in those jobs for a decade if you're not competent."

Added Luke Larson: “I know that perception is always going to be there, there’s nothing I can do about that. I’ve just tried really hard to show that I’m representing the people of King County the best that I can.”

An investigation of the ethics complaint was delayed for several months while the whistleblower negotiated an unrelated settlement to end his employment.

In August 2020, Satterberg’s office formally responded to the complaint, denying the allegations. A month later, Scott Missall, a lawyer hired to investigate, requested emails, personnel records and other documents from Satterberg’s office. In December 2020, he received 1,466 pages, some of which appeared to contradict the office’s denials.

Emails and other records dating to 2010 showed Satterberg’s office hadn’t consistently walled off Mark Larson, nor did he always excuse himself, from discussions on personnel matters involving his son and daughter-in-law.

A letter offering then-26-year-old law student Luke Larson an internship in 2011, for example, showed that Satterberg had instructed him to report to his father on his first day. The next year, when Luke started a full-time job, Mark Larson’s chief deputy arranged an “apparently atypical” meeting for Luke to meet with her and his father upon arrival.

Mark Larson also at times sent, received and was asked for input on emails related to his children’s promotions and pay raises until just before he retired in December 2019, the investigator’s summary shows.

In his interview, Mark Larson said several of the cited records were trivial paperwork. By and large, he said, he excused himself from meaningful personnel issues involving Luke and Michelle, delegating those to his two deputy chiefs or standing committees.

“I am satisfied when it came to any substantive issues,” he said, “I was fully hands off.”

Satterberg separately said the family ties weren’t a secret and his office did take steps to address potential conflicts, but just didn’t document them well. Satterberg also downplayed records that showed otherwise as simple errors.

“Everyone knew who Luke was,” Satterberg said. “He essentially grew up in our office and got hired despite who his father is ... We’re lucky to have (Luke and Michelle) in our office.”

The summary also noted an entry in Luke Larson’s personnel file showing in December 2014, while assigned to prosecute King County District Court cases, he self-reported to Parkington-Thal “that he had shot a young swan by mistake while hunting in Skagit County.”

Parkington-Thal asked Luke “to let [her] know the outcome” of the case, but “there’s no document referencing any follow-up,” the summary says.

Court records show a misdemeanor charge of “taking protected fish/wildlife” was filed in 2015, but later dropped and refiled as an infraction covered by an \$87 bail payment.

Luke Larson, who said in his interview he’s an avid duck and goose hunter, acknowledged he mistook the protected swan in foggy weather. After shooting it, he said, he alerted a nearby game warden.

Satterberg and Mark Larson separately said they weren’t aware of the incident. Larson added the lack of consequences for what amounted to an infraction wouldn’t be unusual for any deputy prosecutor.



A year later, one of Mark Larson's chief deputies offered Luke a District Court management role, saying in an email: "I know it seems early to get a supervising spot but I have no doubt you can pick up this work and help the new deputies."

Dan Clark, one of Mark Larson's top deputies who has since succeeded him as division chief, said there was "never a single whiff of Mark exerting any influence" in such decisions, adding both Luke and Michelle at times received critical evaluations and initially were passed over for senior deputy promotions.

#### **"Old School"**

The ethics investigation also found records showing Parkington-Thal directly involved in several personnel matters involving her stepson, Zach Thal.

That included making calls to hiring personnel about his application for a public defense administrative job in 2014; asking Satterberg's chief of staff to submit his résumé to an outside employer the same year; directly accepting his application for an administrative assistant's job he later got in 2015; and drafting a letter of recommendation on Satterberg's official letterhead in 2015 to help Thal get into law school.

"I signed those all the time for anybody who asked," Satterberg said.

In an email, Parkington-Thal said the office has "made a lot of progress updating our hiring practices." Zach Thal, who now works in private practice in Kitsap County, declined to comment.

In 2017, when Thal, then a 25-year-old law student, applied for a competitive summer internship, he was placed on a "Not Recommended" list behind at least 19 other candidates ranked in two tiers above him, the summary shows.

But a few days later, shortly after emails indicate Satterberg discussed Thal's candidacy with Larson's chief deputy prosecutor, she sent an announcement that internships had been offered to nine candidates, including Thal.

The office later awarded another 2018 internship to Chris Kranda, an applicant who'd already been rejected, after U.S. District Court Judge Robert Lasnik sent emails that "asked Satterberg to reconsider Kranda," the summary shows.

In one email, Lasnik told Satterberg "some of the Old School is working on this problem," and remarked "how the two of them had traded favors regarding past hirings."

Satterberg later replied: "We had more than 100 applications of summer [internships]. We hired 8, and I plucked Zach out of the pile for my turkey ... I'll have Becky pull the Kranda file and see what we can do."

Satterberg noted in his interview that, as he once had, Lasnik and Kranda's father, Michael, had served as chief of staff to the late King County Prosecuting Attorney Norm Maleng. He surmised the judge's "Old School" remark referred to their past roles in the office.

"The unfortunate term 'turkey' is someone you want to sponsor for a candidate," Satterberg added. He said while he asked his hiring team to interview both Thal and Kranda, "I don't make the final decisions."

In an email, Lasnik said his exchanges with Satterberg involved "nothing nefarious or unseemly."

Lasnik explained that when he was Maleng's chief of staff, Maleng asked him "a few times" to interview children of political supporters, judges or elected officials who weren't recommended by the office's hiring committee. At Maleng's direction, the office would hire nonrecommended applicants only if they were "first rate attorneys who can do the job at a high level," Lasnik said.

“It’s in that context that I contacted Dan about Chris Kranda who did great work as my (unpaid) summer intern the year before after his first year of law school,” Lasnik said. “I thought the Hiring Committee might have missed what made Chris such a strong candidate — and I hoped to speak with them about how my law clerks and I were so impressed with Chris’s work for us.”

Chris Kranda, who later was hired by Satterberg’s office but now works for a private firm in Seattle, declined to comment.

The ombuds’ probe also uncovered emails showing in June 2018, after Thal was assigned to a King County District Court internship, he informed a supervisor and Mark Larson that a state trooper had arrested him for suspicion of driving drunk. Thal admitted he’d had a few drinks earlier that evening, but was released after blood-alcohol tests came in just under the legal limit for impaired driving.

In follow-up emails, Larson “suggests that Thal be moved” from his internship in District Court — where DUIs are prosecuted — “to avoid any conflicts of interest,” the summary says. A few days later, Thal was reassigned to an internship created for him in the civil division.

About three weeks after his arrest, a King County deputy prosecutor declined to charge Thal, noting in a memo “juries have a hard time convicting a person of DUI” with blood-alcohol tests below the limit.

Asked whether his office should have handled Thal’s charging decision, Satterberg said he wasn’t aware it did, adding: “We would typically ask the city attorney to avoid the appearance of impropriety.”

Following Satterberg’s interview, his office provided emails showing that, two days after Thal’s arrest, a senior prosecutor told Mark Larson he was “trying to get a municipality on the east side to take this case on as a conflict.” Meanwhile, a county prosecutor saw the case in a District Court queue, reviewed it and declined to prosecute it, according to a spokesperson for Satterberg.

“It doesn’t appear (the deputy prosecutor) knew Zach was Heidi’s stepson — and she certainly didn’t know that the case was being sent to another office to avoid a conflict of interest,” Satterberg spokesperson Casey McNerthney said. “That was a communication error in our office.”

About a month later, the Bellevue City Attorney’s Office separately reviewed the case and declined to charge Thal for the same reasons, a memo provided by Satterberg’s office shows. The State Patrol said it has no record of ever receiving Bellevue’s decision, however.

After Thal finished his internship, Satterberg’s chief of staff agreed to let him keep working part time during law school, the summary says.

### **Concerns**

In March 2021, after the ombuds’ investigator requested more records, Satterberg’s office asked to negotiate a settlement. Calderwood agreed to suspend the probe and Missall, the lawyer who investigated the whistleblower’s complaint, wrote up the summary.

Five months later, a proposed early resolution agreement was brought to the ethics board for the first time since the county’s code was changed in 2012 to allow such settlements.

Satterberg’s office acknowledged it had failed to document safeguards against conflicts, and said it would write a new anti-nepotism policy and conduct training.

The agreement didn’t mention most of the details in the investigation’s summary. Unaware of them, two board members still voiced concerns that the resolution seemed too passive and didn’t hold anyone accountable.

Satterberg's chief of staff, Leesa Manion, responded that Parkington-Thal was "remorseful and embarrassed," meeting minutes show. She added that Mark Larson already had retired and it would be unfair to punish his son and daughter-in-law "for the mistakes of others."

She didn't mention that a year earlier, Satterberg had reappointed Mark Larson to lead prosecution of the first police officer charged with murder under Washington's new police-accountability legal standards. The office isn't paying Larson, but covered his annual law license dues.

The board ultimately voted 3-to-1 to approve the agreement. At the request of board member Michael Blake, Manion agreed to place a copy of it into Parkington-Thal's personnel file.

In an email, Blake, a University of Washington philosophy professor, said he felt "too much" of the discussion centered on arguments that "the people in question were good people at heart — and not enough about the specifics of their actions, and the rules that should have been followed."

The fact that the summary's details "were not provided supports my worries," he added. " ... Withholding relevant facts does nothing to prevent future, more troubling, actions."

Thomas Miller, a corporate human resources executive who cast the vote against the agreement, said in an interview he saw "several red flags" indicating it needed more scrutiny. The board's approval was "the final straw" in his decision to quit what he called "a toothless committee" after 5 1/2 years.

Last month, Calderwood notified Satterberg's office that a reporter had asked for records about the ethics complaint. Two business days later, Parkington-Thal sent an officewide email presenting the anti-nepotism policy and informing employees about required training.

"We haven't done a good job of documenting in writing the screening of one family member from another," said her email, which didn't mention the complaint or the agreement to resolve it.

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HEADLINE	11/20 Used car prices explode to new high
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.zerohedge.com/markets/used-car-prices-continue-historic-vertical-ascent-new-record-high">https://www.zerohedge.com/markets/used-car-prices-continue-historic-vertical-ascent-new-record-high</a>
GIST	<p>After last week's <a href="#">hot CPI print</a>, the great inflation debate continues to dominate headlines. The Biden administration and Federal Reserve members have been insisting inflation is transitory. But new, used car data shows prices continue to soar, suggesting inflation is anything but transitory.</p> <p>Anyone shopping for a used car since the virus pandemic began has been hit with extraordinarily high prices as snarled supply chains and chip shortages crimp new car output, pushing consumers onto secondary markets.</p> <p><a href="#">The Manheim Index</a>, the most recognized wholesale used-vehicle price index by financial and economic analysts, shows that used car prices rose 4.9% in the first 15 days of November compared to October. The overall index has jumped 44.9% from November 2020.</p> <p>"As was the case in October, some of the monthly increase is a result of the seasonal adjustment, as November typically sees above-average vehicle depreciation and therefore used price declines. The non-adjusted price increase through mid-November was 2.6%," the report said.</p> <p>The report suggests that used car prices will remain high while automakers continue to work through supply chain woes into next year. There are rising probabilities of price fluctuations up and down.</p> <p>Ford's CFO John Lawler <a href="#">warned</a> earlier this month that supply constraints could continue into 2022 and said, "we'll be dealing with [supply chain issues] for a while." This means used car prices might rise even further through year-end.</p>

	<p>Consumers will have to get used to paying a very high sticker price for a used car. Shown below is the average used car price surges as the available supply sinks.</p> <p>The working poor who have had their credit scores tarnished during the pandemic downturn will feel the burden of pricier used cars. If prices continue higher, this means people's incomes will be more heavily weighted to servicing car payments and could take away from other spending (such as eating out).</p> <p>According to <a href="#">WaPo</a>, "Rental-car companies for the first time have become major buyers of used cars at auction, instead of big sellers. That's because they can't get enough new vehicles and are desperate to fill their fleets, industry executives say."</p> <p>And it's not just rental-car companies buying used cars. Dealers have been soaking up supplies to keep their parking lots full.</p> <p>As used car costs resume their vertical move higher, this suggests the used <a href="#">car component of CPI has more room to rise in November</a></p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Belgians protest reinforced restrictions</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-business-brussels-europe-8b2fb4eb4992b54cd544fc8fa5e19f26">https://apnews.com/article/coronavirus-pandemic-health-business-brussels-europe-8b2fb4eb4992b54cd544fc8fa5e19f26</a>
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS (AP) — Ten of thousands of people demonstrated through central Brussels on Sunday to protest reinforced COVID-19 restrictions imposed by the Belgian government to counter the latest spike in <a href="#">coronavirus</a> cases.</p> <p>Many among the police estimate of 35,000 at the rally had already left for home when the demonstration descended into violence as several hundred people started pelting police, smashing cars and setting garbage bins ablaze. Police replied with tear gas and water cannons and sought to restore order when dusk settled on the Belgian capital.</p> <p>"We have injuries but we cannot yet say how many," said police spokesperson Ilse Vande Keere. It was also unclear how many people were detained.</p> <p>Earlier, marchers came to protest the government's strong advice to get vaccinated and any possible moves to impose mandatory shots.</p> <p>Shouting "Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!" and singing the anti-fascist song "Bella Ciao," protesters lined up behind a huge banner saying "Together for Freedom" and marched to the European Union headquarters. Amid the crowd, the signs varied from far-right insignia to the rainbow flags of the LGBT community.</p> <p>The World Health Organization said last week that <a href="#">Europe was the hot spot of the pandemic right now</a>, the only region in which COVID-19 deaths were rising. The autumn surge of infections is overwhelming hospitals in many Central and Eastern European nations, including <a href="#">Ukraine</a>, <a href="#">Russia</a>, <a href="#">Romania</a>, <a href="#">the Czech Republic and Slovakia</a>.</p> <p>Over the past several days, there have been many <a href="#">anti-vaccination marches in European nations</a> as one government after another tightened measures. Dutch police <a href="#">arrested more than 30 people</a> during unrest in The Hague and other towns in the Netherlands on Saturday, following much worse violence the previous night.</p> <p><a href="#">Austria is going into a 10-day national lockdown on Monday</a> for all of its people, after first imposing a lockdown on the unvaccinated. Christmas markets in Vienna were packed Sunday with locals and tourists alike taking in the holiday sights before shops and food stalls had to close.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Dutch police: arrests amid ongoing unrest</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/dutch-police-arrest-30-amid-ongoing-unrest-81310968">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/dutch-police-arrest-30-amid-ongoing-unrest-81310968</a>
GIST	<p>EDE, Netherlands -- Dutch police have arrested more than 30 people during unrest in The Hague and other towns in the Netherlands that followed an “orgy of violence” the previous night at a protest against coronavirus restrictions.</p> <p>The violence by groups of youths in The Hague and elsewhere Saturday night wasn't as serious as Friday night in Rotterdam, where police opened fire on rampaging rioters and arrested 51 people.</p> <p>Police said Sunday that they arrested 19 people in The Hague and used a water cannon to extinguish a fire on a street.</p> <p>Two soccer matches in the country's top professional league were briefly halted when fans — banned from matches under a partial lockdown in force in the Netherlands for a week — broke into stadiums in the towns of Alkmaar and Almelo.</p> <p>In The Hague, police said five officers were injured as they tried to break up unrest by a group of youths who set at least two fires on streets and threw fireworks. Police said in a tweet that one rioter threw a rock at an ambulance carrying a patient to a hospital.</p> <p>In the southern towns of Roermond and Stein, police said they arrested a total of 13 people for setting fires and throwing fireworks, and in the fishing village of Urk police arrested eight people for public order offenses, Dutch broadcaster NOS reported.</p> <p>Earlier Saturday, two protests against COVID-19 measures proceeded peacefully in Amsterdam and the southern city of Breda. Thousands of people marched through Amsterdam to protest COVID-19 restrictions.</p> <p>Tens of thousands of protesters also took to the streets of Vienna on Saturday after the Austrian government announced a nationwide lockdown beginning Monday to contain skyrocketing coronavirus infections.</p> <p>There were also demonstrations in Italy, Switzerland, Croatia and Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Police in Rotterdam said that three rioters were hit by bullets and investigations were underway to establish if they were shot by police on Friday night. The condition of the injured rioters wasn't disclosed.</p> <p>Officers in Rotterdam arrested 51 people, about half of them minors, police said Saturday afternoon. One police officer was hospitalized with a leg injury sustained in the rioting, another was treated by ambulance staff and “countless” others suffered minor injuries.</p> <p>Rotterdam Mayor Ahmed Aboutaleb called the rioting in his city an “orgy of violence” and said that “on a number of occasions the police felt it necessary to draw their weapons to defend themselves.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 USMC vaccine compliance: worst of military</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2021/11/21/vaccine-mandate-marine-corps/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2021/11/21/vaccine-mandate-marine-corps/</a>
GIST	<p>Up to 10,000 active-duty Marines will not be fully vaccinated against the <a href="#">coronavirus</a> when their deadline arrives in coming days, a trajectory expected to yield the U.S. military's worst immunization rate.</p> <p>While 94 percent of Marine Corps personnel have met the vaccination requirement or are on a path to do so, according to the latest official data, for the remainder it is too late to begin a regimen and complete it by the service's Nov. 28 deadline. Within an institution built upon the belief that orders are to be obeyed, and one that brands itself the nation's premier crisis-response force, it is a vexing outcome.</p>

The holdouts will join approximately 9,600 Air Force personnel who have outright refused the vaccine, did not report their status, or sought an exemption on medical or religious grounds, causing a dilemma for commanders tasked with maintaining combat-ready forces — and marking the latest showdown over President Biden’s authority to impose vaccination as a condition of continued government service.

“Marines know they’re an expeditionary force, and pride themselves on discipline and being first to fight,” said David Lapan, a retired Marine Corps officer and former communications chief for the service. Leadership, he said, should be alarmed that the Marine Corps ethos of always being ready for the next mission appears to be tarnished in this case. “Why,” Lapan asked, “did they decide not to follow a direct order?”

Answering that question will be essential, he added, “if this is somehow indicative of a problem” that could arise again in the future.

The Marine Corps made no secret it has struggled with vaccine hesitancy in the ranks. Late last month, officials issued an ultimatum: [get vaccinated, apply for an exemption or get kicked out](#).

Then, as the cutoff to be in compliance drew near, the Marines’ top general, Commandant David H. Berger, and his senior enlisted adviser, Sgt. Maj. Troy E. Black, distributed a video message to the force imploring those who had not been vaccinated to get it done. They appealed to Marines’ sense of fidelity and calmly explained that the Marine Corps would be less capable unless everyone met the requirement.

“When something bad happens around the world and the president says, ‘I need to know how long it’s going to take to get Marines there,’ it’s too late then to get vaccinated,” Berger said in the video.

“It’s challenging for us to be able to continue the mission,” Black added, “if we’re not ready to go.”

Berger spoke last: “We need every single Marine in the unit to be vaccinated. We don’t have extra Marines. We’re a pretty small force, and we have to make sure that everybody on the team is ready to go all the time. That’s our job.”

The Marine Corps is the U.S. military’s least-populous branch of service. Numbering about 183,000, it’s roughly one-third the size of the active-duty Army but fills a significant role within the Defense Department’s portfolio. Whenever there’s a high-stakes emergency overseas — such as [the hasty evacuation from Afghanistan](#) this past summer — Marines are often among the first U.S. personnel to set foot in harm’s way.

Importantly, the service’s coexistence within the Navy Department means Marines routinely operate from ships at sea, living in close, enclosed spaces where the virus can spread readily. Navy data shows that 99.7 percent of sailors have received at least one shot of the coronavirus vaccine ahead of the same Nov. 28 deadline — the top figure among all military services.

The general’s message, circulated Nov. 8, appears to have made little impact. At that time, the Marine Corps’ partial vaccination rate — an indicator of newly obtained shots — was 94 percent and remained unchanged as of Wednesday, according to official data. The rate slowed in recent weeks overall, indicating the pool of Marines who intended to comply has all but dried up.

A spokesperson for Berger declined to comment, pending a final tally.

Capt. Andrew Wood, a Marine Corps spokesman at the Pentagon, would not address questions about the service’s vaccination rate. He issued a written statement instead. “The Marine Corps has always recognized the threats posed by the COVID-19 Pandemic as a readiness issue, which is why we have consistently emphasized the importance of receiving the vaccine,” it said. “We are still ready to fight and win our nation’s battles should we be called.”

It's unclear how many unvaccinated Marines have requested medical or religious exemptions, or how many of those requests have been granted, but such cases are expected to be exceptionally rare. The Navy has granted six permanent medical exemptions and no religious exemptions — for any vaccine — in the last seven years, officials said. The Army has granted just one permanent medical exemption and, like the Navy, zero religious exemptions, the service said. The Army's compliance deadline is Dec. 15 — the last for active-duty personnel — and 95 percent of soldiers have received at least one dose of the vaccine, service data show.

Air Force officials are processing about 4,800 religious exemption requests but so far have not approved any. Nearly 1,400 airmen have received medical exemptions, but most are temporary, said Ann Stefanek, an Air Force spokeswoman. Temporary medical exemptions can be issued when someone has a current coronavirus infection and is awaiting a doctor's authorization to be vaccinated. Its vaccination deadline was Nov. 2.

Wood said Marine Corps data on refusals and exemptions would be made available after the deadline passes.

Guidance from the military services outlines escalating punishment for vaccine refusers, starting with counseling from commanders and moving onto letters of reprimand and ultimately dismissal from the service. Navy Secretary Carlos Del Toro told reporters Thursday that each Marine refusing a vaccine will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

"We're just not going to all kick them out on the day of the deadline itself," [he said](#), predicting "minimal impact on our overall readiness."

The military's vaccine mandate has energized conservative politicians eager to challenge Biden's directives covering private businesses as well as government workers. Some predicted [an exodus](#) from the ranks and warned of crippling strains on the [defense industrial base](#).

Earlier this month, Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt (R) took the extraordinary step of firing the state's National Guard commander and [ordering his replacement](#) to make vaccination optional while personnel are under state control. Other states have expressed interest in enacting similar policies.

Vaccination rates throughout much of the National Guard and reserves remain well below those of the active-duty force. These units tend to be less connected to the rigid top-down environment that governs daily life on active duty. Military analysts also associate vaccine hesitancy among service members with the circulation of false information online, broader political and societal attitudes, and cultural traits unique to each service.

Marines, on average, are younger, predominantly male and — like many enlisted personnel throughout the armed forces — generally don't have four-year college degrees, [according to 2018 Pentagon data](#). All of those factors contribute to lower vaccination rates in the broader U.S. population by some degree, according to [government data](#) and [surveys](#). And compared to civilians in the same age range, Marines generally are more physically fit and thus may simply doubt the need to be vaccinated.

For Marine Corps leadership, much of the concern now will turn to whether unvaccinated Marines are congregated in certain units, Lapan said. That would affect how drastically commanders may need to rebalance their personnel to ensure deployment standards.

Some highly deployable units appear to have overcome those issues. The crisis-response unit that supported the emergency evacuation from Kabul in August was 98 percent vaccinated months before then, officials said.

But overall, the disparity in Marines' vaccination rate compared to those of other services "seems to indicate a failure of leadership to get ahead of the vaccine hesitation within their own ranks," said Rachel E. VanLandingham, a former Air Force lawyer and president of the National Institute of Military Justice.



	<p>Berger, speaking at a national security conference earlier this month, appeared to acknowledge the behavioral pattern is worrisome.</p> <p>“We’re challenged by disinformation. ... I’m concerned about it because we have to be ready to go every day,” he said. “We are taught that your unit is more important than you are.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Vancouver B.C. marooned by flooding</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/21/canada-flooding-climate-change.html?action=click&amp;module=Well&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;section=World%20News">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/21/canada-flooding-climate-change.html?action=click&amp;module=Well&amp;pgtype=Homepage&amp;section=World%20News</a>
GIST	<p>The intense rains and heavy winds that descended last week on British Columbia, the Canadian province known for its mountains, coastline and majestic forests, forced 17,000 people from their homes, emptying entire towns and inundating farms.</p> <p>Vancouver, Canada’s third-largest city, lost its road and rail links to the rest of the country, cut off by washed-out bridges and landslides.</p> <p>It was the second time in six months that the province had endured a major weather-related emergency, and experts say the two disasters are probably related to changes in the climate.</p> <p>British Columbia has been besieged this year by record-breaking heat, wildfires and floods. The disasters have killed hundreds — including three people in the recent rains — and caused hundreds of millions of dollars in damage. The impact has rippled across Canada after hobbling the province and the port of Vancouver, which is vital to the country’s economy.</p> <p>“In the last six months, B.C. has both burned and drowned,” said Merran Smith, the executive director of Clean Energy Canada, a climate program at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. “So there’s really no greater evidence of climate change right now than here in British Columbia.”</p> <p>In July, <a href="#">record temperatures</a> as high as 121 degrees Fahrenheit brought drought and uncontrollable wildfires. The heat, which was concentrated in the province’s interior, killed 595 people from June to August, and fire <a href="#">consumed an entire town</a>.</p> <p>The floods last week have spared more lives but have destroyed vital infrastructure and left freight to pile up at Vancouver’s port, Canada’s gateway to Asia. The country’s supply lines have been disrupted as well at a time when American ports are too backed up to offer much help.</p> <p>Experts said that events in this sequence — heat, fire, drought, flood — could produce so-called compound effects.</p> <p>A drought can dry out vegetation, which in turn can fuel and intensify fires. Fire itself can weaken or kill plants and make the soil less permeable, meaning that rain is more likely to run off rather than soak in, causing flash floods and landslides.</p> <p>Rachel White, a professor at the University of British Columbia who studies how large-scale atmospheric patterns contribute to extreme weather, said it was impossible to say for sure whether the extraordinary heat and the devastating rains resulted directly from climate change.</p> <p>“We need to do more research to really try and understand what’s going on here,” she said. “Is this also a sign of climate change or did British Columbia just get incredibly unlucky this year?”</p> <p>However, she said, one thing is certain: “These events were made worse because of climate change.”</p>

A common weather event known as an “atmospheric river” led to the province’s devastating flooding and set rainfall records in several communities. A moisture conveyor belt, perhaps better known as the Pineapple Express, it is a relatively narrow but very long band of fast-moving, moisture-laden air that forms in the Pacific Ocean near Hawaii.

Normally, such systems release that moisture as intense rain once they reach British Columbia’s coastal mountains and peter out before they enter the dry interior region on the other side. But this atmospheric river was different, said Armel Castellan, a meteorologist with the weather service at Environment and Climate Change Canada.

“This had so much potency to it that it was able to ride up those mountains and really unleash into what is otherwise the dry belt,” he said.

Alex Hall, a professor of atmospheric science at U.C.L.A., added that the phenomenon was notable for its scale. The interior town of Hope, for instance, was hit with 11.6 inches of rain in 52 hours, about a third more than the amount of rain it usually receives in all of November.

“What’s not normal is to have atmospheric river events that are this large,” he said, adding that in terms of rainfall, these events “are nearly equaling the historic record.”

Because the interior region had already had an usually wet fall, the ground was saturated before the storm hit, Mr. Castellan said. Compounding the situation, there was relatively little snow at higher altitudes to soak up water. In addition, the summer of extreme heat, drought and wildfires had left little vegetation to slow or prevent mudslides.

“When you have those sequences set up right, you produce even more extreme conditions,” Dr. Hall said.

Human meddling with geography has also made things worse. Much of the fertile farmland near Abbotsford was created 100 years ago by draining the Sumas Lake, a process that forced Indigenous people onto other land. While pumps and levees held back some of the water, the storm last week allowed the lake to reassert itself after a century.

As the rain poured down and roads closed, panicked shoppers reprised the early days of the pandemic and cleared out several grocery stores, particularly in the Vancouver area.

Rebuilding lost bridges, roadways and railways could take months. But Greg Wilson, the director of government relations in British Columbia for the Retail Council of Canada, said that widespread shortages were not likely in the province. Fresh produce can still arrive on the highway from Seattle, the route much of it usually follows to supply Vancouver this time of year.

One highway out of Vancouver reopened to light cars and trucks over the weekend and another restored a single lane of traffic for essential travel. But trucks from elsewhere in Canada are mainly reaching Vancouver by detouring through the United States. And much of the interior of British Columbia, the hardest-hit area, is still open to the rest of Canada by train and truck.

“There’s no danger of the Vancouver area running out of food,” Mr. Wilson said. “There will be challenges, but there’s lots of supply.”

British Columbia has been a leader in trying to mitigate the effects of climate change, said Barry Prentice, a professor at the University of Manitoba and the former director of its transport institute. In 2008, it introduced [North America’s first carbon tax](#). It has also taken physical measures. The port in Vancouver, he said, has been lifted by about three feet to accommodate rising sea levels.

But province’s mountainous nature, he said, limits what is possible and will make rebuilding a difficult and prolonged process.

	<p>“To try and make everything resilient is very hard,” he said. “We don’t have many options for routes coming through the mountains.”</p> <p>The delays in reopenings will most likely significantly affect all of Canada since Vancouver’s port connects the country to Asia, both for imports of consumer goods and economically vital exports of resources like grains and potash for fertilizers. While a rail line to the port in Prince Rupert in northern British Columbia remains open to the east, Professor Prentice said that the port could not physically handle all of Vancouver’s traffic on top of its normal operations.</p> <p>While it may be possible to beef up the transportation network during rebuilding, Professor Prentice said that the only long-term solution remained dealing effectively with climate change.</p> <p>Ms. Smith of Clean Energy Canada said that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s government had a credible and ambitious climate plan but that the country had yet to rein in its oil and gas industry, particularly oil sands operations based largely in neighboring Alberta.</p> <p>“We need to reduce the emissions from the oil and gas sector; it is one of Canada’s biggest challenges,” she said. “All of these other good policies, we need to see them implemented without delays. There’s a lot of inaction that gets disguised as flexibility, and we’re past that time.”</p> <p>While the water has started to recede in most flood zones, it is unclear when evacuees will return home or abandoned cars will be returned to their owners. And more danger may be ahead for British Columbia. Forecasts predict another batch of heavy rain this week.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Covid surge strains Michigan hospitals</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/21/world/covid-vaccine-boosters-mandates?type=stylIn-live-updates&amp;label=coronavirus%20updates&amp;index=0# covid-19-surge-strains-michigans-hospitals">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/21/world/covid-vaccine-boosters-mandates?type=stylIn-live-updates&amp;label=coronavirus%20updates&amp;index=0# covid-19-surge-strains-michigans-hospitals</a>
GIST	<p>Many hospitals in Michigan are nearing their capacities amid an alarming surge in coronavirus cases.</p> <p>The toll on hospitals is compounded by a staffing shortage that is rippling through the state’s health care system and a rise in people seeking medical help for issues not related to Covid-19, health leaders said.</p> <p>Covid-19 hospitalizations in the state are up 46 percent over the last two weeks, according to a New York Times database. The only other state with a higher spike in that time was New Hampshire, where hospitalizations increased 58 percent. Michigan had a higher per capita rate of hospitalizations than all but one state, North Dakota. Covid-19 cases in Michigan are up 78 percent over the last two weeks, according to The Times’s database. Only three states have bigger increases over that time.</p> <p>“We’re all scared to death because this is now so hard to predict what will happen,” Dr. Darryl Elmouchi, the president of Spectrum Health West Michigan, said in an interview Saturday. “We’re preparing for the worst.”</p> <p>Dr. Elmouchi said that Spectrum Health, which has 14 hospitals in the state, is seeing more patients than ever, driven by the Covid surge and people seeking treatment for ailments not related to the virus.</p> <p>The hospital has had to stretch its resources to meet demand. It increased its I.C.U. patient capacity by about 40 percent since the latest surge, Dr. Elmouchi said.</p> <p>On Saturday, Spectrum Health had 371 patients hospitalized with Covid, and as of earlier in the week, 86 percent of those hospitalized for Covid were unvaccinated. He added that the surge was taking a toll on staff morale.</p> <p>“It’s one thing if you ask people to take extra shifts for a few weeks,” he said. “It’s another thing if you ask people to take extra shifts for months.”</p>

	<p>On Friday, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services <a href="#">announced</a> a face mask advisory in an effort to slow the virus's spread ahead of the holidays. The health department recommended that all residents older than age 2 should wear a face mask at indoor gatherings and urged businesses to implement a mandatory mask policy.</p> <p>The department <a href="#">said</a> the burdens on Michigan's hospitals "have reached a critical point in areas of the state."</p> <p>Experts said the latest surge was even more concerning than past increases, and urged residents to get vaccinated. Fifty-four percent of people in Michigan were fully vaccinated as of Saturday, fewer than the national rate of 59 percent.</p> <p>"Our previous surges generally went from trough to peak in about two months," said Laura Appel, a senior vice president with the Michigan Health and Hospital Association. "In this current surge, we have been moving from the previous trough since about July 1 and we are still headed upward."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 More Asia countries slowly reopen borders</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/21/world/covid-vaccine-boosters-mandates#asian-countries-reopen-tourism">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/21/world/covid-vaccine-boosters-mandates#asian-countries-reopen-tourism</a>
GIST	<p>As Asian countries are learning to live with the coronavirus — with the notable exception of <a href="#">China</a> — and gaining momentum in their vaccination campaigns, several are cautiously reopening their borders and welcoming travelers.</p> <p>Although the Asia-Pacific region <a href="#">initially lagged</a> in vaccinations and many countries remained committed to some of the world's toughest restrictions for much of the year, the region's vaccination rates have been catching up.</p> <p>Yet while some Asian nations vaccinated the majority of their populations months ago, they are only now reopening to international travel — just before the winter holidays.</p> <p>Singapore, after more than 20 months of tight border restrictions, began loosening its international travel regulations last month. The city-state has fully vaccinated nearly 92 percent of its population, the highest rate in the world, according to <a href="#">Our World in Data</a>.</p> <p>On Monday, Singapore said it would allow back in travelers from <a href="#">five more countries</a>, including India and Indonesia, starting later in the month.</p> <p>"Within Southeast Asia, the pandemic situation is fast stabilizing," said Ong Ye King, Singapore's health minister, at a news conference this month. "This gives us scope to start opening up our borders with regional countries, as well."</p> <p>Singapore and South Korea also opened a reciprocal <a href="#">travel bubble</a> on Monday. South Korea has been easing travel regulations, first for Koreans and now for foreigners.</p> <p>Although new case numbers have recently reached a record in South Korea, it plans to continue its "<a href="#">live with Covid</a>" strategy. The country has fully vaccinated <a href="#">78 percent</a> of its population, according to the government.</p> <p>In Cambodia, which is reporting one of the world's highest vaccination rates, fully vaccinated travelers no longer have to quarantine starting this week. While the government says the country has fully vaccinated 88 percent of its people, based on a population of 16 million, a <a href="#">New York Times database</a> puts the rate at 80 percent, based on a population of nearly 16.5 million. Cambodia has also started administering booster shots and inoculating young children.</p>

Even some Asian countries with lower vaccination rates have reopened their borders or plan to do so soon.

In the Philippines, where only 31 percent of people have been fully vaccinated, the Tourism Ministry [said on Friday](#) that it had approved opening to fully immunized travelers from certain countries “in principle.” A final decision will be made by the government’s Covid task force.

In Myanmar, the military government said it planned to reopen land crossings with China and Thailand next month. It also said it would allow international flights early next year if coronavirus cases continued to decline and if enough people were vaccinated.

Myanmar’s [health care system has been in disarray](#) since the military’s Feb. 1 coup, and the country has lagged behind the rest of Southeast Asia in vaccinations. The country of 54 million [faced a surge in cases and deaths in July](#), but the daily numbers have since declined.

Vietnam, which has fully vaccinated 39 percent of its population, recorded a 46 percent increase in daily cases over the past two weeks, according to a [New York Times database](#). Starting this month, international visitors are being allowed to visit tourist destinations, including the resort island of Phu Quoc and Quang Nam Province.

The government hopes to open the rest of the country to international travelers next year.

“Along with other economic sectors, the tourism industry should take steps to restart safely,” Deputy Prime Minister Vu Duc Dam said last month at a tourism meeting with other government officials.

India reopened its borders to most international travelers this week after [20 months](#) of restricted travel. The country has fully vaccinated just 29 percent of its population and plans to open travel bubbles with 99 countries.

Indonesia and Thailand have allowed visitors from certain countries since [October](#). Indonesia has fully vaccinated 33 percent of its population, while Thailand has inoculated 54 percent.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Sudan military frees, reinstates civilian PM</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/21/world/africa/sudan-coup-abdalla-hamdok.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/21/world/africa/sudan-coup-abdalla-hamdok.html</a>
GIST	<p>NAIROBI, Kenya — Sudan’s prime minister was released from detention on Sunday, four weeks after he was ousted in a military coup, as part of a deal to end a bloody standoff that led to dozens of protester deaths and threatened to derail Sudan’s fragile transition to democracy.</p> <p>The prime minister, Abdalla Hamdok, was set free after weeks of tense negotiations with Lt. Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the army chief who <a href="#">ousted him from power on Oct. 25</a>.</p> <p>Appearing in public for the first time since he vanished into house arrest, Mr. Hamdok appeared alongside General al-Burhan on Sunday afternoon at a hastily organized ceremony at the presidential palace in the capital, Khartoum.</p> <p>The two men signed a deal that provided for Mr. Hamdok’s immediate reinstatement as prime minister, the release of all political detainees and a return to a power-sharing arrangement intended to steer Sudan toward democratic elections as early as 2023.</p> <p>Seated beside the two leaders was <a href="#">Lt. Gen. Mohamed Hamdan, a ruthless and ambitious paramilitary commander</a> who is seen by many as one of the most powerful people in Sudan, one of the largest countries in Africa.</p>

But the exact terms of the deal were unclear, with much left unsaid between leaders who until hours earlier were bitter foes. And there were early signs that it would be wholly rejected by the angry young Sudanese who have massed in the streets to protest the military's dominance.

In recent weeks, the security forces have shot dead 40 protesters and wounded hundreds of others in a brutal crackdown on the wave of anti-coup demonstrations that have swept Sudan's major cities, according to Sudan's [largest doctors' group](#).

The protesters called for the reinstatement of Mr. Hamdok, a technocrat who [became prime minister in 2019](#) after tumultuous protests that [ousted Sudan's longtime dictator, Omar Hassan al-Bashir](#). Mr. Hamdok shared power with military leaders as part of a transitional arrangement intended to lead toward the country's first free election in decades.

But as news of the political agreement filtered out on Sunday, some protesters gathered at the gates of the palace where Mr. Hamdok was signing the deal with General al-Burhan, apparently infuriated that he had compromised with the military they despised.

Inside the hall, Mr. Hamdok, dressed in a suit and tie, appeared remarkably phlegmatic beside the military officers who had imprisoned him at his home for nearly a month. When he accepted the job of interim prime minister, Mr. Hamdok said, "I realized that the road would not be strewn with roses."

But he spoke only obliquely of his ordeal, preferring to point to the path ahead. "By joining hands, we can all reach a peaceful shore," Mr. Hamdok said.

In brief remarks, General al-Burhan, who stood up clutching a baton, paid tribute to Mr. Hamdok for his "confidence and trust," and promised Sudanese citizens that he would continue with the political transition "until your dreams of democracy, peace and justice are realized."

Under the terms of the deal, Mr. Hamdok would be allowed to form a new government, said a Western official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive negotiations.

But important points of contention between the two sides have not been finalized, the official said. They included crucial arrangements for sharing power and making key appointments, such as attorney general.

Critics said that they feared the deal would allow the military to retain its decades-long dominance over Sudan, and it was rejected out of hand by the Umma Party, Sudan's largest, and the Forces of Freedom and Change, a major coalition of civil society and political groups.

In a [statement on social media](#) that appeared to signal new political difficulties for Mr. Hamdok, the coalition group said that any compromise with the military was unacceptable. "There is no negotiation, no partnership and no legitimacy for the revolutionaries," the coalition said.

Since the coup, General al-Burhan has come under tremendous pressure from the United States and other Western countries to change course. The pressure has included freezing aid to Sudan, which is in the throes of a deep economic crisis, and halting debt relief programs worth up to \$50 billion.

At the same time, analysts say, the army chief needs to quell discontent in his own ranks. The power-sharing agreement that the military reluctantly signed in 2019, after the ouster of Mr. al-Bashir, had long been fraught with tensions.

But in recent months, the military grew visibly uncomfortable with ceding more power to civilian leaders who could threaten the privileges and economic interests they had accrued over Mr. al-Bashir's 30 years of rule.



	<p>Some officers also opposed the government’s decision to <a href="#">send Mr. al-Bashir to stand trial</a> at the International Criminal Court in The Hague on decade-old charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity over his role in atrocities in the western Darfur region in the 2000s.</p> <p>If Mr. al-Bashir is convicted of war crimes, military officers who served under him during that period, including General al-Burhan, could also be exposed to charges.</p> <p>More broadly, though, the military appears determined to ensure that it holds the balance of power as the country moves toward elections planned for late 2023 or early 2024.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 New normal? Seattle housing market slows</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattlepi.com/realestate/article/zillow-housing-market-seasonal-slowdown-oct-2021-16635452.php">https://www.seattlepi.com/realestate/article/zillow-housing-market-seasonal-slowdown-oct-2021-16635452.php</a>
GIST	<p><a href="#">Seattle's</a> booming housing market continued to show minuscule signs of a seasonal slowdown last month, providing little, if any, relief to buyers according to Zillow's latest <a href="#">market report</a> which examined nationwide housing trends in October.</p> <p>The <a href="#">seasonal reprieve in the hot housing market</a> began in September as prices began to stabilize from last year's record gains. For the Seattle metro, the new report found the typical home value was \$695,058 in October, up 21.8% — or \$124,712 — compared to the same time last year. The report also showed that home value appreciation has slowed since September and continued to slightly ease last month.</p> <p>However, for-sale inventory remains historically low, and buyers have fewer options. Seattle experienced a 4.5% drop in inventory from September to October. Compared to this time last year, inventory is down 13.6% and many experts don't see it rising to pre-pandemic levels soon.</p> <p>"Home buyers shopping this fall shouldn't expect the same frenzied demand that triggered bidding wars on listings this spring and summer," said Zillow senior economist Jeff Tucker in a <a href="#">news release</a> Thursday. "The normal seasonal slowdown of autumn has returned, when many families are busy with back-to-school activities and planning for the holidays. Buyers can expect less competition, meaning more time to decide on a house and the potential for prices to fall on listings."</p> <p>Homes also remained on the market for slightly longer in October than previous months, showing a slight easing in competition that could continue into the winter months. The median time on the market for home listings in Seattle last month was seven days, up from six days in September. Nationwide, listings spent an average of 10 days on the market.</p> <p>Zillow also noted that rent growth was slowing down across the country with only a 0.8% increase in price from September to October. In Seattle, typical rent reached \$2,181 a month, up 13.9% from October 2020 but only a 0.2% increase from the previous month. While growth for rent appears to be decelerating, it is still "cooling off from an exceptionally hot starting temperature," according to the report.</p> <p>While the housing market is showing signs of a fall slowdown, other experts predict that inventory in the Puget Sound region <a href="#">will remain limited through the spring of next year</a>. New listings in Western Washington shrunk by 19% in October compared to the previous month, and the region only had 0.66 months of inventory. The region has not seen over a one-month supply of inventory since July 2020. Along with seasonal changes, brokers with the Northwest Multiple Listing Service (NWMLS) reported sensing indecisiveness in buyers last month as many regional employers <a href="#">waver on a return date for in-person work</a>.</p> <p>"We are approaching our seasonal low in inventory. Each year, as the year closes out, potential home sellers wait until the new year to put their homes on the market," said Frank Wilson, branch managing broker at John L. Scott Real Estate. "In reality, a home listed now will have higher viewership since the buyer pool has not gone down."</p>

HEADLINE	11/21 WA schools vulnerable to quakes, tsunamis
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/pacific-nw-magazine/as-oregon-outfits-its-schools-for-seismic-safety-many-in-washington-along-with-the-students-inside-remain-highly-vulnerable-to-earthquakes-and-tsunamis/">https://www.seattletimes.com/pacific-nw-magazine/as-oregon-outfits-its-schools-for-seismic-safety-many-in-washington-along-with-the-students-inside-remain-highly-vulnerable-to-earthquakes-and-tsunamis/</a>
GIST	<p>ON THE SURFACE, there's not much to distinguish Tumwater Middle School from any other modern campus. The two-story building is boxy, with a faux-brick facade in shades of ocher and tan. Blond wood brightens the corridors, and concrete floors are polished to a shine.</p> <p>The only hint there's something unique about this structure in the Portland suburb of Beaverton is the steel cross-bracing left exposed along one hallway. The beams, painted blue and filled with concrete, are part of what made Tumwater the most seismically resilient school in the Pacific Northwest when it opened five years ago — outshining even the newest schools in Washington.</p> <p>Since then, Beaverton has built an additional six schools that are equally robust, all designed to not only ride out a Cascadia megquake, but also to remain usable after the shaking stops.</p> <p>That might not sound extraordinary, but it's more than state and federal building codes require. To meet current standards, new structures need only be designed for what's called life-safety. That means they won't collapse and kill people — or, as California earthquake expert Lucy Jones puts it, occupants will be able to “<a href="#">crawl out alive</a>.” What happens next is not the code's concern. Many of the schools, office towers and apartments that keep communities humming are likely to be damaged beyond repair, with devastating economic and social consequences.</p> <p>Beaverton was the first school district in Oregon to decide that wasn't <a href="#">good enough</a> for its students and neighborhoods.</p> <p>“The odds of the next big earthquake happening during the lifetime of these new buildings seemed scary-high,” recalls Richard Steinbrugge, the former Beaverton facilities administrator who convinced the district it made sense to <a href="#">spend more</a> for sturdier schools. “This is just a smart insurance policy — a one-time premium that basically provides insurance for 80 to 100 years.”</p> <p>The premium turned out to be surprisingly small, though Steinbrugge didn't know that back in 2014, when he sat stunned in an Oregon engineering association meeting listening to a presentation about the region's worst seismic nightmare: a major rupture on the offshore Cascadia Subduction Zone.</p> <p>The speaker was structural engineer Kent Yu, co-author of an ambitious, 50-year <a href="#">resilience plan</a> developed by <a href="#">Oregon's seismic safety commission</a> to help the state prepare. Without improvements to its rickety utilities, Portland and other cities could be without water or sewer service for months, he warned. It could take 18 months for schools to reopen, triggering an exodus from the state. Among the plan's recommendations was for schools to be built or retrofitted to higher standards so damage would be minimal, and students could be back in class within a month.</p> <p>“That really got my attention,” Steinbrugge says. The Beaverton School District was on the verge of passing a \$680 million bond — at that time the biggest in state history — for new schools and upgrades. “I felt like we had a huge opportunity. Even a responsibility.”</p> <p>He and Yu started talking about what it would take to build stronger schools that could also be used as emergency shelters.</p> <p>“I told him: ‘This has probably never been done before, but maybe we can do it together,’ ” Yu says.</p> <p>IT'S NOT HARD to design structures to survive earthquakes relatively unscathed. Critical facilities such as hospitals and fire stations are required to be built for “immediate occupancy,” the higher standard that</p>

Beaverton wanted to apply to its new schools. All it takes are bigger footings, more robust shear walls, stronger connections and more steel bracing, Yu explains.

The trickier problem was figuring out how to keep utilities intact so gyms and cafeterias could be transformed into shelters where hundreds of people could take refuge.

At each of its new schools, Beaverton added oversized emergency generators and tanks that hold enough fuel to keep the power on for four days or more. They braced and strengthened HVAC systems and ducts, along with water, sewer and electrical lines in kitchens, bathrooms and large common areas. Plans for underground water tanks were scrapped due to cost, but exterior connectors allow emergency trucks to pump water into the buildings.

The price tag for all the seismic upgrades? One to two percent of total construction costs.

“Everyone was surprised it was so small,” Yu says. “This really is a no-brainer.”

Still, only a handful of other school districts in Oregon have embraced a similar approach.

In the coastal community of Seaside, it took nearly a decade to gain [community support](#) for a new middle and high school campus built to the immediate-occupancy standard and situated on high ground safe from tsunamis. The complex, which includes a 2-million-gallon water tank, opened this fall.

“It’s given us peace of mind, not only for our kids and schools, but for our community,” says district superintendent Susan Penrod.

The Portland School District requires major seismic retrofits to meet the higher standards in parts of a building that could be used as shelters. New schools constructed under a \$1.2 billion bond approved in 2020 will be designed for immediate occupancy. Oregon also mandates immediate occupancy for common areas at schools retrofitted through its dedicated grant program.

In Washington, which long has lagged behind the rest of the West Coast in [school seismic safety](#) and earthquake [preparedness](#), the idea of raising the construction bar for schools has yet to catch on.

“Washington has just been building schools like crazy,” but districts haven’t been willing to pay a little more for stronger structures, says Portland architect Jay Raskin, who co-authored the Oregon Resilience Plan with Yu and advised the Beaverton district. “It’s a missed opportunity.”

[PACIFIC BEACH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL](#) on the Washington coast sits at the opposite end of the resilience spectrum from Beaverton’s schools. Built in 1956 before seismic construction codes, the complex is a scant three blocks from the beach. You can hear the surf from the school grounds, says principal Marlene Perez.

“It’s pretty soothing, but then you think about the danger because of the subduction zone,” she says. “I try not to go there.”

There’s high ground nearby, so the kids have a good chance of escaping a tsunami if the building doesn’t crumble around them. But a [new report](#) to the state legislature that evaluated the seismic soundness of 561 school buildings ranks Pacific Beach as one of the worst. All three wings on the small campus pose a “very high” risk to life and safety in a big earthquake. The two-story masonry gym is especially vulnerable.

Pacific Beach isn’t alone. Based on structural integrity and soil type, the report gave one star out of five — the lowest possible rating — to 93% of schools surveyed. That means there’s a high chance the buildings will collapse in multiple spots and kill or injure occupants, says Corina Allen, leader of the [School Seismic Safety Project](#) at the Washington Department of Natural Resources, which oversaw the report. Thirty-six of the school buildings also are in tsunami zones.

“Several districts declined to participate because they didn’t want a record of their school having seismic deficiencies, and then they would have to do something about it,” Allen says.

IT’S LARGELY UP TO districts to pay for retrofits and new construction through bond elections — which require a 60% supermajority to pass. Many of the one-star schools are in rural areas with low incomes and property values. In Seattle, nearly all older schools have been retrofitted thanks to generous voters and the state’s biggest property tax base.

“It should not be the case that some kids are in schools that are really, really unsafe, and only wealthy communities get safe schools,” says Andrew Kelly, superintendent of the [North Beach School District](#), which includes Pacific Beach Elementary.

The [Hoquiam School District](#) has only five schools, but a dozen of its buildings are on DNR’s “very high” or “high” priority lists for seismic upgrades. The city’s high school is more than 50 years old and sits on unstable soil at the edge of Grays Harbor.

Residents of the former timber industry hub consistently support modest levies and bonds, says superintendent Mike Villarreal. One elementary school is currently getting upgrades thanks to a \$6.8 million bond passed in 2018. But the estimated cost to retrofit or replace the high school ranges from \$50 million to \$120 million.

“Our community can’t handle that,” Villarreal says. “That’s way too much.”

With more than 10,000 students, Marysville might seem better situated in the economically robust Puget Sound area. But it also has a tough time getting big construction bonds passed, says facilities manager Gregg Kuehn.

The state report gives single-star ratings to 21 of the district’s school buildings, and singles out four as “highest priority.”

Even the Renton School District, which has a long history of voter-approved construction bonds, has four buildings on the “highest priority” list. A major difference between the Seattle suburb and poorer parts of the state is that Renton was able to hire engineers to do detailed analyses of the risky buildings and map out a plan for the fixes with a reasonable expectation the money will come.

WITHOUT STATE SUPPORT for less-affluent districts, Washington’s school seismic safety gap will only widen. That’s a problem the rest of the West Coast began tackling years ago. California mandated strict seismic standards for schools beginning in 1933 and invested heavily in retrofitting or replacing unsound buildings.

British Columbia has [spent billions](#) for retrofits, including more than \$800 million in the past five years. [Oregon’s Seismic Rehabilitation Grant Program](#), funded through state bond sales, was approved by voters in 2005. The program has awarded nearly \$460 million — with an additional \$160 million in the pipeline — for hundreds of projects.

Washington’s grant program has completed retrofits at a single school: Edison Elementary in Centralia. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction launched the effort in 2020 and asked the legislature for \$75 million through the end of the current budget cycle. They got \$53 million.

Among more than a dozen schools prioritized for funding is Pacific Beach Elementary, where the gym will be strengthened. But the cost of the retrofit has tripled because engineers discovered the soil is likely to liquefy during an earthquake. So OSPI will be going back to the legislature early next year, seeking \$8.6 million in [supplemental funding](#).

OSPI hopes lawmakers will provide \$25 million a year, says Randy Newman, director of school facilities. “This is going to be a long-term program until we reach all the schools that need it,” he says.

With so many schools and so little money, retrofits will have to meet only a basic, life-safety standard. The new report recommends Washington consider raising construction standards for new schools, but that’s likely to be a lengthy process. In Oregon, a proposal to strengthen the building code for schools failed, though proponents plan to introduce it again.

Jones, the seismologist Californians call “the earthquake lady,” is leading a push for stronger codes for most buildings across her home state to speed recovery. “We need homes and workplaces that survive us after earthquakes,” she wrote in a [recent column](#) urging the legislature to support a pending bill.

WASHINGTON’S LACKLUSTER PERFORMANCE reflects the lack of public or political support. The last Cascadia earthquake struck in 1700, and estimates of the average recurrence range from 250 to 500 years. In the face of that uncertainty, it’s easy for politicians to gamble it won’t happen on their watch.

That’s infuriating to Jim Buck, a former state legislator who lives in the tiny town of Joyce on the Olympic Peninsula. “You can’t put a kid in a boat without a life jacket, or in a car without a car seat,” he says. “Why in the world would you be required by law to send them to a school that could kill them?”

Buck and his wife, Donna, might be the state’s leading [citizen champions](#) for earthquake preparedness. Recognizing they live in a place that will be isolated after a seismic disaster, the couple has been working with neighbors to plan and stockpile emergency caches of food and gear. When the schools report was quietly released in June, Buck was shocked it wasn’t getting [much attention](#).

He waded through the report and its [unwieldy appendices](#), some [so big](#) he couldn’t open them on his computer. Much of the language seemed geared to engineers instead of parents.

“I can tell you right now,” he says, “there wasn’t a single legislator who had read it or understood what it said.”

He and Donna spent five weeks distilling the results into news releases and fact sheets. They transferred reams of data into a [searchable spreadsheet](#) and wrote letters to individual principals and school boards. Then they emailed or snail-mailed the packages to more than 4,000 people across the state, from lawmakers to local fire chiefs.

The response has been mostly positive, Buck says. One person objected to the photo Buck included. It’s a graphic image of children buried in rubble in Sichuan, China, where hundreds of schools collapsed in a 2008 earthquake and killed more than 5,000 students.

Buck agrees it’s hard to look at.

“You just have tears in your eyes.”

But the report’s technical language and cost-benefit tone didn’t sit well with him. It was important, he felt, to add what seemed to be missing: a reminder of what’s at stake.

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HEADLINE	11/20 China committee: list to replace US tech
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/business/secretive-chinese-committee-draws-up-list-to-replace-u-s-tech/">https://www.seattletimes.com/business/secretive-chinese-committee-draws-up-list-to-replace-u-s-tech/</a>
GIST	China is accelerating plans to replace American and foreign technology, quietly empowering a secretive government-backed organization to vet and approve local suppliers in sensitive areas from cloud to semiconductors, people familiar with the matter said.

Formed in 2016 to advise the government, the Information Technology Application Innovation Working Committee has now been entrusted by Beijing to help set industry standards and train personnel to operate trusted software. The quasi-government body will devise and execute the “IT Application Innovation” plan, better known as Xinchuang in Chinese. It will choose from a basket of suppliers vetted under the plan to provide technology for sensitive sectors, from banking to data centers storing government data, a market that could be worth \$125 billion by 2025.

So far, 1,800 Chinese suppliers of PCs, chips, networking and software have been invited to join the committee, the people said, asking not to be identified discussing private information. The organization has so far certified hundreds of local companies this year as committee members, the fastest pace in years, one of the people said.

The existence of the Xinchuang white-list, whose members and overarching goals haven’t been previously reported, is likely to inflame tensions just as Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping wrapped up their first face-to-face virtual summit. It gives Beijing more leverage to replace foreign tech firms in sensitive sectors and quickens a push to help local champions achieve tech self-sufficiency and overcome sanctions first imposed by the Trump administration in fields like networking and chips.

“China is trying to develop homegrown technologies,” said Dan Wang, technology analyst at Gavekal Dragonomics. “This effort is more serious now that many more domestic firms now share that political goal, since no one can be sure that U.S. technologies can avoid U.S. export controls.”

The push to replace foreign suppliers is part of a broader effort by Beijing to exert control over its sprawling technology industry, including over data security. Already, the government has forced overseas cloud providers such as Amazon Web Services and Microsoft to set up joint ventures to operate on the mainland. Apple has also yielded its user data storage business to a government-backed operator in Guizhou. The grip is set to tighten, as the tech industry ministry gains more oversight of industrial and telecom data and proposes new rules that will require crucial data to be stored inside the country.

While few details have been revealed about the Xinchuang committee or its members, any companies that are more than 25% foreign-owned will be excluded from the panel, shutting out overseas suppliers including Intel Corp. and Microsoft. Chinese tech start-ups that are primarily funded by foreign investment will also face a higher bar, though Alibaba Group Holding and Tencent Holdings, the country’s two largest providers of cloud services, have managed to circumvent those rules by applying for membership through locally incorporated subsidiaries, the people said.

“U.S. choke-hold policies, exemplified by the Entity List, were the direct catalyst that pushed China to build the Xinchuang sector,” Shanghai-based research firm iResearch said in a report in July. “The blacklisting underlined the urgency for China to invest more in technology innovation and have the key technologies made in China.”

The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and the China Electronics Standardization Association, which oversees the committee, didn’t respond to requests for comment. Alibaba representatives didn’t immediately respond to a written request seeking comment. A Tencent spokesperson declined to comment.

The committee had 1,160 members in July 2020, according to Netis, a cloud company that claimed it passed a complex review process. Other prominent companies include Beijing-based CPU maker Loongson, server maker Inspur and operating systems developer Standard Software. Westone, an information security company that could be tasked by Beijing with taking over Didi Global’s data management, is also a member.

Membership on the panel could give local suppliers a key advantage in having their technology approved under the Xinchuang plan, thus unlocking a billion-dollar market. Xinchuang-related business generated 162 billion yuan (\$25 billion) in sales last year and is on track to reach nearly 800 billion yuan by 2025, according to a report co-authored by the China Software Industry Association.



“In every sector of the Xinchuang industry, there’s a significant imbalance between supply and demand,” it said. “Suppliers need to press the gas pedal to the floor in order to meet the demand.”

In September, the Xinhua-backed Economic Information Daily newspaper listed 40 top performers of the Xinchuang project, which included Huawei Technologies, Alibaba’s cloud unit and network security company Qi An Xin Technology Group. In an April list of 70 model cases in the Xinchuang industry, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology praised Alibaba’s “100% self-developed” cloud platform for “providing a safe, trustworthy digital infrastructure for all levels of governments.”

Communist Party entities, the government and military will be the first to adopt Xinchuang products, followed by financial and state-owned companies, according to iResearch.

“Xinchuang can’t be built in one day, it’s a long-term strategy that helps China grow its own IT technologies,” the report said.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Frustration: homeless changes landscape</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/at-green-lake-and-woodland-park-frustration-mounts-as-homelessness-changes-the-landscape/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/at-green-lake-and-woodland-park-frustration-mounts-as-homelessness-changes-the-landscape/</a>
GIST	<p>Ten months ago, Melissa Meier and her husband, Dean Oquist, moved to Edmonds. They sold their home of 27 years in Seattle’s Phinney Ridge.</p> <p>“I loved living in this area. I walked around Green Lake three times a week. I met with friends for walks and rowed in the Green Lake crew team for a season,” Meier remembers.</p> <p>For the couple, it all began changing during the pandemic, as Seattle’s homelessness crisis pushed ever more visibly into this neighborhood, as it did around the city.</p> <p>As of Nov. 18, the count from Mayor Jenny Durkan’s office was 30 tents at Green Lake and a row of 11 RVs and cars and vans in encampments along the west side of the lake. The latter is apparently a fluctuating number. A video that same day showed 19 vehicles.</p> <p>From a car on Aurora Avenue North or the Aurora underpass at North 63rd Street, the rows and clusters of tents and RVs still startle.</p> <p>Seattle’s homelessness crisis has been conspicuous for some time in parks, outside storefronts and on blocklong stretches of sidewalk, with people living in tents and sleeping bags, often among piles of debris. It has left many neighbors in nearby houses pained by the human suffering and frustrated that City Hall isn’t solving the problem now.</p> <p>Nearby, on the Woodland Park hillside, the count from Durkan’s office was 60 tents and “structures,” near the lawn bowling club and picnic shelters. Before the pandemic, driving north on Aurora, the view on some occasions had been of players of the easygoing sport.</p> <p>Citing the encampments, <a href="#">cross country events</a> with thousands of participants at Lower Woodland Park this year had to find other locations or be canceled.</p> <p>For Meier, an art teacher, it’s all been too much, as it has been for many Seattleites.</p> <p>Bruce Harrell won the mayor’s race by more than 17 percentage points, <a href="#">one of the largest margins</a> in the last two decades. A promise he often repeated was that he would “<a href="#">clean up</a> our parks and sidewalks.”</p>



Says Meier, “The change at Green Lake has broken my heart. This is not my Seattle anymore. Garages are rummaged through. Garbage is tossed on the sidewalks. You have to be careful to sidestep needles. I miss my old Seattle.”

Meier once was part of a group of volunteers at her church who worked at a women’s shelter. She understands many living in the park suffer from not just poverty but also mental health problems and addiction.

“I am not unfeeling or without compassion,” she says. “But Seattle’s hands-off approach, and let whoever, and whatever, happen in the parks, has ruined the city.”

The couple also owns a rental home on Phinney Ridge, which they’re considering selling because of what they say are onerous city rental regulations, and because of the change in Green Lake.

Erich Eipert, a board member of the Woodland Park Lawn Bowling Club, says the club lost its main source of income from rentals to groups wanting to enjoy a get-together — first because of the pandemic and then because the encampments scared potential clients. He tells of collecting enough needles to fill a 1½ gallon plastic bag.

Says Eipert, “We players once had cross country runners, dog walkers, picnickers, mountain bike riders and children around us as we played. They’re all gone. Now we just have addicts, belligerent fence jumpers, vandals, graffiti, trash, squatter shouting matches, used needles, ambulance calls and low-hanging campfire smoke.”

Anthony Derrick, Durkan’s press secretary, says Green Lake is among the encampment hot spots such as the Ballard Commons that in the next few weeks will get “intensified outreach” offering shelter to individuals before encampments are removed.

But first, he says, new shelter beds have to open up. The city has a timeline that shows 380 new units opening up by mid-December, with some accommodating couples.

Then, those who set up new tents “will be asked to leave,” an approach that’s “seen success” in places like Cal Anderson Park on Capitol Hill, he says.

As for the RVs, vans and cars, Derrick says the 72-hour ordinance will be enforced. You can only park in the same spot for three days. Otherwise, the owner may be cited and the vehicle towed.

But, he says, a vehicle with someone living in it “would not be impounded unless it poses a specific risk to public health such as inadequate sanitation.”

So, does that mean those vehicles can stay?

“Not necessarily,” says Derrick in an email. “The city often works with people living in RVs to encourage them to voluntarily relocate their vehicle and to connect them to appropriate resources for people experiencing homelessness. This approach has often been successful, making it unnecessary to resort to impounding the vehicle.”

• • •

This city considers Green Lake a treasure. It’s on a 2010 list of [most-visited city parks](#) in the country, according to The Trust for Public Land, a park advocacy nonprofit.

On a sunny day, the area is at its postcard best, and much of the lake lives up to that idealized image.

Parents walking along with a baby stroller. A jogger along the 2.8-mile track circling the 293 acres of water. Couples stretched out on the grass. The espresso place with fresh pastries. The historic Gregg’s Cycle that first opened its doors in 1932.

When the money can be found, the city has a proposed plan for a new building to replace the old, existing rec center, including a new gym and pool.

That's the Seattle of a hopeful vision. Then there is the part along a concentrated portion of west Green Lake and the Woodland Park hillside.

On a recent afternoon, Andrea Seidler, who's lived on Phinney Ridge since 1997, was again visiting the Green Lake encampment. She's 61, a retired assistant to a broker.

She's gone on runs around Green Lake regularly since age 22.

"It's an oasis. I enjoy every minute of it," says Seidler. She's also gotten to know many of the people in the park.

"We're on a first-name basis," she says. "Every single one of them tells me they don't want to be in a tent."

In her runs around the lake, Seidler couldn't help but notice visitors' reaction to the tents. "A lot of the frowns and glaring was from people walking by and seeing the trash. I thought I was helping by keeping the area neat and tidy," she says.

Back in January, seeing the garbage accumulating at the encampments, Seidler decided to help with a one-woman cleanup. She bought large-size cinch garbage bags, and one of those litter-grabber tools.

The many needles she found on the ground she'd put in a sharp-object container, or on top of a concrete post, just so that they'd be seen and not stepped on.

Seidler stopped her garbage pickup. By then she was on her sixth litter grabber as the others broke from too much use. It didn't seem to be helping.

In March, a "Clean City" program was started by the city that included picking up trash and needles at encampments across the city.

Since then, 5.3 million pounds of trash and some 93,000 needles have been collected at those encampments.

Among those Seidler frequently talks to is James Schierman, 44, who lives in a tent. His state ID shows his address at 167th and Aurora Avenue North. It's the Shoreline branch of Therapeutic Health Services.

"That's where I get my methadone," he says. "I was on heroin." He also says he has bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, and receives government disability, getting \$835 a month plus \$197 in food stamps.

"All my money goes pretty much for food, and a little of clothing," Schierman says. He's lived in various parts of the Northwest — here, Portland, Marysville and other surroundings — and has been homeless for about 13 years, he says.

On this afternoon, Schierman has to deal with somebody having stolen his cellphone.

He understands the frustrations from neighbors.

"I can't blame them. It's gross," he says about the garbage.

Schierman says he'd love to move into some kind of housing.

Meanwhile, what?

“I’d sleep in my tent 24 hours a day,” he says. “But you can’t do that. I’d go crazy.”

Since he was interviewed, Schierman has moved on; it’s not clear where, says Seidler.

• • •

In postings on Nextdoor, and when a callout was done for this story, neighbors told their stories of an increase in crime and vandalism that they associate with the encampments, from seeing somebody sawing a catalytic converter off a car, to photos of a charred tree by an encampment.

The Seattle Fire Department says from the beginning of the year until Oct. 3, it has responded to 1,013 fires at encampments citywide.

A sampling of fire incident reports at Green Lake during July and August: “Illegal cooking fire in encampment violating burn ban. Campers refuse to extinguish.” “Shopping cart full of stuff on fire.” “Small fire under tree.”

But the [Seattle Police Crime Dashboard](#) for Phinney Ridge has stayed about the same when comparing pre-pandemic 2018 with 2020 and its pandemic encampments surge.

2018: Violent crime, 11. Property crime: 425.

2020: Violent crime, 10. Property crime: 454.

Neighbors and someone like the lawn bowling club’s Eipert say there’s no point in making many official police reports of what they say is increased crime. “We never get any action. Nobody wants to waste their time,” he says.

These days, says Janie Duckett, a real estate agent whose family has lived by the Bathhouse Theater at the lake for over 20 years, “When I do walk the lake, the sound of generators and the smell of burning garbage and urine is overpowering. The sad thing is, my 10-year-old is used to it!”

The neighbors resent being labeled as NIMBYs and privileged homeowners. In emails they send to city officials, the property taxes they pay are sometimes cited.

It is property taxes that — at \$354 million in 2020 — are the [largest revenue](#) for the city’s \$1.4 billion general fund, followed by the sales tax, business and occupation taxes, and utility taxes.

In interviews with numerous neighbors who live by the lake and Woodland Park, they tell of often unresponsive city agencies.

“I’m not some right-wing conservative,” says Kyle Oswald, in medical device sales. He and his wife (she declined to have her name in the story for privacy reasons) moved to the Green Lake area eight years ago. “We love being in the city, going swimming in the lake, on the trail with my daughter.”

Back in August, he sent another of his frequent emails, this time to Durkan and Councilmembers Andrew Lewis (whose district includes Magnolia and Queen Anne) and Dan Strauss (whose district includes Green Lake):

“Once again, I’m forced to lobby a complaint against your tolerance of homeless and drug abusers,” Oswald wrote. “I’m so tired of non actionable results taking place. Here is the latest scenario. My 6 year old daughter and I walked to the tennis court on the west side of Green Lake. Tennis courts which I help fund with the taxes I pay!

“Only to be beaten to the courts by the three individuals in the picture below (Oswald attached an image). But they weren’t the normal athletes getting some exercise playing tennis. They were three addicts in

	<p>various stages of a high. One hanging on the fence shouting, one shaking and vomiting on the court and the other laying around ... Let me guess how each of you will respond to this picture ... silence!!!”</p> <p>Oswald says there was no reply.</p> <p>Strauss declined to be interviewed for this story but Amanda Pleasant-Brown, his chief of staff, emailed a statement that concluded, “It is my understanding the city will prioritize Woodland Park and Green Lake as these resources come online.”</p> <p>• • •</p> <p>During the campaign for mayor, Harrell and his opponent in the mayor’s race, City Council President M. Lorena González, showed up at Green Lake on separate occasions to talk to the neighbors. It didn’t go well for González, who was peppered with questions about what exactly she proposed to do about the encampments.</p> <p>Janie Duckett and her husband showed up for both events.</p> <p>“We asked what her upcoming action plan would be in the next 30 to 60 days and she responded that she planned to have more meetings,” she recounts in an email.</p> <p>The neighbors have expectations. The city has expectations.</p> <p>Duckett’s precinct went 84% for Harrell, who will be sworn in Jan. 1.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 Assessing damage Whatcom Co. flooding</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/officials-to-begin-assessing-damage-of-whatcom-county-flooding-on-monday">https://www.q13fox.com/news/officials-to-begin-assessing-damage-of-whatcom-county-flooding-on-monday</a>
GIST	<p><b>WHATCOM COUNTY, Wash.</b> - Agency leaders and local officials will begin assessing the damage of the historic flooding in <a href="#">Whatcom County</a> on Monday.</p> <p>The flooding displaced families, destroyed property and claimed the life of a man who was <a href="#">swept away by the floodwaters</a>. The water levels have receded, and now it falls to the Washington State Military Department's Emergency Management division and Whatcom County officials to conduct detailed inspections of areas hit the hardest by the 'November Floods,' as the county refers to them.</p> <p>Inspections will be conducted Monday through Wednesday, which will provide greater insight into the level of damage and the dollar impact.</p> <p>Whatcom County says there will be two teams comprised of state and local workers, five people per team, who will gather data to help guide the request for a FEMA disaster declaration. These teams will be inspecting properties, and they urge homeowners to be aware they may stop by.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 Governor encourages Covid booster shots</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/the-vaccine-is-the-path-out-of-the-pandemic-gov-inslee-encourages-booster-shots-after-cdc-fda-approval">https://www.q13fox.com/news/the-vaccine-is-the-path-out-of-the-pandemic-gov-inslee-encourages-booster-shots-after-cdc-fda-approval</a>
GIST	<p><b>OLYMPIA, Wash.</b> - Governor <a href="#">Jay Inslee</a> encourages everyone to start getting <a href="#">COVID-19 booster shots</a>, as the FDA and CDC expanded their eligibility on Friday.</p> <p>The Western States Scientific Safety Review Workgroup, comprised of Washington, Oregon, California and Nevada, confirmed Saturday the <a href="#">FDA and CDC now recommend COVID-19 vaccine booster shots</a>. The heads of state agreed with the scientific consensus, saying anyone who received a two-dose mRNA vaccine like Moderna or Pfizer:</p>

- **Should** receive a booster shot if they are 50 years or older, or at least 18 years old if residing in a long-term care facility
- **May** receive a booster if they are an adult between ages 18–49

"The COVID vaccines continue to amaze me as a scientific success. The vaccine is the path out of the pandemic. I encourage everyone five years and older to get vaccinated – whether you are a child or adult getting their first vaccine[sic] or a 50-year-old getting a booster, we can protect each other with this important step," said Gov. Inslee. "As we head into winter, we want to make sure to have as much protection against COVID as we can. We are seeing surging cases in other parts of the country, and we want to do what we can to prevent ourselves entering another COVID wave. Now that boosters are available to all adults, we hope everyone will take advantage of them. Protect yourself, your loved ones, your coworkers and your friends."

A booster dose should be administered at least six months after the second dose, health officials say.

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HEADLINE	11/20 Covid deaths 2021 surpass 2020 toll
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-covid-19-deaths-in-2021-surpass-2020-11637426356">https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-covid-19-deaths-in-2021-surpass-2020-11637426356</a>
GIST	<p>The number of U.S. Covid-19 deaths recorded in 2021 has surpassed the toll in 2020, according to federal data and Johns Hopkins University, demonstrating the virus's persistent menace.</p> <p>The total number of reported deaths linked to the disease topped 770,800 on Saturday, Johns Hopkins data show. This puts the pandemic-long total at more than twice the 385,343 Covid-19 deaths recorded last year, according to the most recent death-certificate data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>The spread of <a href="#">the highly contagious Delta variant</a> and low vaccination rates in some communities were important factors, infectious-disease experts said. The milestone comes as Covid-19 cases and hospitalizations <a href="#">move higher again</a> in places such as New England and the upper Midwest, with the seven-day average for new cases recently closer to 90,000 a day after it neared 70,000 last month.</p> <p>Covid-19 has proven to be an enduring threat even in some of the most vaccinated places, many of which are confronting outbreaks again now, as the world prepares to live with and manage the disease <a href="#">for the long term</a>. In Europe, parts of Austria, Germany and the Netherlands have imposed new restrictions in recent days <a href="#">after Covid-19 cases rose</a> and hospitals came under strain.</p> <p>The 2021 U.S. death toll caught some doctors by surprise. They had expected vaccinations and precautionary measures like social distancing and scaled-down public events to curb the spread of infections and minimize severe cases. But lower-than-expected immunization rates as well as fatigue with precautionary measures like masks allowed the highly contagious Delta variant to spread, largely among the unvaccinated, epidemiologists say.</p> <p>"Heading into this year, we knew what we needed to do, but it was a failure of getting it done," said Abraar Karan, an infectious-diseases doctor at Stanford University.</p> <p>Among missteps, Dr. Karan said, public-health officials failed to effectively communicate that the purpose of vaccines is to protect against severe cases of Covid-19 rather than to prevent the spread of infection entirely, which may have led some to doubt the effectiveness of the shots. Authorities also failed to use testing to effectively prevent super-spreader events, Dr. Karan said.</p> <p>Joey Rodriguez, a high school soccer coach in Arlington, Texas, died from Covid-19 complications in October. The 44-year-old father of three was fully vaccinated but had a rare immune-system condition that made him more vulnerable to infections.</p>

He fell ill in August with what seemed like a sinus infection, his wife, Lena Rodriguez, said. When he died after weeks of intubation, some of his friends who had harbored doubts about the severity of the pandemic and the importance of vaccines changed their minds about the risks of Covid-19 and began to take a more cautious approach to the disease, she said.

“It definitely opened a lot of eyes that this pandemic is very real,” Ms. Rodriguez said.

The Journal calculated when the number of known Covid-19 deaths in 2021 surpassed 2020’s figure by using Johns Hopkins and CDC data. The Johns Hopkins numbers reflect a near-real-time count from states, but can lag behind when deaths actually occurred. CDC death-certificate data don’t track the changing pandemic as quickly, but do reflect the actual day of death.

The CDC’s count for 2020 may grow with further revisions. These records are also close to showing more deaths in 2021.

Comparing the two pandemic years is imperfect because the first coronavirus-related deaths in the U.S. weren’t recorded until February 2020, while 2021 began in the grips of a wintertime surge. During just one week in January, the U.S. recorded a peak of nearly 26,000 Covid-19 deaths, CDC data show.

CDC data also indicate there was a larger undercount of Covid-19 deaths in 2020, when the disease was newer and a scarcity of tests made confirming some infections difficult. A Wall Street Journal analysis of CDC data shows about 54% of roughly 875,000 excess deaths the agency attributes to the pandemic came last year.

“Early in the pandemic we would have been missing more,” said Robert Anderson, chief of the mortality statistics branch at the CDC’s National Center for Health Statistics.

This excess also reflects collateral pandemic damage, from [surging overdose deaths](#) to other medical problems [as people avoided hospitals](#).

Another major difference between the years: Vaccines were in development in 2020, and in arms in 2021. About 59% of the U.S. population is fully vaccinated, according to the CDC, and some 17% have received booster shots. Studies indicate the vaccines are highly effective at preventing severe disease, though they are slightly less effective against Delta, and authorities [are urging all adults to get booster shots](#) to bolster waning immunity.

“The vaccine is not a panacea,” said Ana Bento, an epidemiologist at Indiana University-Bloomington. Dr. Bento was the co-author of [an August study](#) in the journal Health Affairs that argued that nearly 140,000 U.S. Covid-19 deaths between the beginning of 2021 and the end of May could have been prevented by vaccinating a larger portion of the population.

After heavily affecting coastal states last year, the virus [hit hard in the Deep South this year](#), often spreading quickly through populations with low vaccine uptake, according to health officials.

States hit hard early on in the Northeast had some of the highest Covid-19 death rates per 100,000 residents in 2020, led by New Jersey, CDC data show. [New York ranked fourth](#), behind the Dakotas. Southern states—Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee and Florida—have had the highest rates this year.

Vermont has the lowest Covid-19 death rate per 100,000 people since the pandemic began, although the state is in a continuing surge. Vermont also has the most fully vaccinated population among the states, at 72%. Mississippi, closer to the bottom of the list with about 47% fully vaccinated, has the nation’s highest death rate since the pandemic began.

“What we’ve been through was not inevitable, and where we go from here is not inevitable,” said Thomas Dobbs, Mississippi’s state health officer, during a recent roundtable discussion of Covid-19 hosted by state officials and streamed on Facebook.

	<p>Deaths remain concentrated in older people, CDC data show, but <a href="#">younger people make up a higher portion</a> of the total now because older people including nursing-home residents are among the most widely vaccinated. While 81% of Covid-19 deaths hit people ages 65 and up last year, that group represents about 69% of this year's deaths.</p> <p>Deaths among younger people are rarer, but the 20,563 deaths among people under 45 this year are more than double the deaths in this group last year.</p> <p>"There are plenty of what we call the young invincibles who just didn't get around to getting a vaccine," said Olveen Carrasquillo, chief of the internal medicine division at the University of Miami's Miller School of Medicine, "and a lot of meetings with family where they say, 'Oh he's so stubborn, we told him to get vaccinated, but he wouldn't.'"</p>
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HEADLINE	11/19 New Covid war: redefining vaccinated
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.axios.com/coronavirus-vaccines-boosters-fauci-america-c0f4e198-9a2f-42c4-ba74-3fa06ce1d811.html">https://www.axios.com/coronavirus-vaccines-boosters-fauci-america-c0f4e198-9a2f-42c4-ba74-3fa06ce1d811.html</a>
GIST	<p>As health officials push COVID booster shots, a debate is quickly emerging around whether the definition of "fully vaccinated" should be changed to include an additional dose of the vaccine.</p> <p><b>Why it matters:</b> Booster shots provide remarkably strong protection against coronavirus infections, at least for a period of time. But getting the majority of Americans to stick out their arm again would be extremely challenging.</p> <p><b>Driving the news:</b> Two governors said this week that they don't consider people who haven't received a booster shot to be fully vaccinated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"We're 11 months into the vaccination program. In my view, if you were vaccinated more than six months ago, you're not fully vaccinated," Connecticut <a href="#">Gov. Ned Lamont said</a> yesterday.</li> <li>"We are analyzing what we can do to create those incentives — and potentially mandates — for making sure that people are fully vaccinated, which means three vaccines," New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham said Wednesday.</li> <li>The New Mexico state health secretary <a href="#">told the AP</a> that changing the definition of fully vaccinated is being discussed, and that he expects a new public health order to be released in the next few weeks.</li> <li>The U.K. will adjust the definition to include booster shots, Prime Minister <a href="#">Boris Johnson said Monday</a>.</li> </ul> <p><b>Reality check:</b> Only 17% of U.S. adults have received a booster shot, <a href="#">according to the CDC</a>, although many of those people haven't received their primary series within the last six months and are not yet eligible.</p> <p><b>Between the lines:</b> NIAID director Anthony Fauci told Axios earlier this week that changing the definition federally "hasn't been on the table yet," but didn't rule it out in the future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That means a patchwork set of definitions could emerge across the country, at least in the short term.</li> <li>And given the growing number of vaccine mandates in place, formally changing the definition of fully vaccinated could be much more significant than a simple change in rhetoric.</li> </ul> <p><b>The other side:</b> Changing the definition "would have major implications across many aspects of the pandemic, in some cases making it more difficult to control," said Walid Gellad, a professor of medicine at the University of Pittsburgh.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"We haven't thought through all the implications to start saying this casually. It's premature," he added.</li> </ul>



**State of play:** The FDA is expected to OK booster shots for all adults at least six months out from their first round of Pfizer or Moderna. The CDC will also begin considering the change today.

- J&J recipients are already eligible for a booster.
- Although the federal government currently only recommends booster shots for certain mRNA recipients who are vulnerable to infection or severe disease, many states have plowed ahead and already made all adults eligible six months after their primary round.

**The bottom line:** Most vaccinated people — particularly younger, healthier ones — are still well protected against severe disease and death with only two doses.

- But boosters dramatically increase protection against infection, which can help reduce the spread of the virus. They also restore protection against serious infections among vulnerable people.
- And officials are making the case that merely protecting against hospitalization and death shouldn't be our only goal with vaccines.
- "I don't know of any other vaccine that we only worry about keeping people out of the hospital," Fauci said at a briefing earlier this week. "I think an important thing is to prevent people from getting symptomatic disease."

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HEADLINE	11/21 France forces to Caribbean; quell violence
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.news.com.au/world/coronavirus/global/france-sends-special-forces-to-its-caribbean-region-of-guadeloupe-after-covid-riots/news-story/db54e7f07a7a27702b5104db0024b171">https://www.news.com.au/world/coronavirus/global/france-sends-special-forces-to-its-caribbean-region-of-guadeloupe-after-covid-riots/news-story/db54e7f07a7a27702b5104db0024b171</a>
GIST	<p>France has sent dozens of elite police and counter-terrorism officers to its Caribbean island of Guadeloupe this weekend, following looting and arson in defiance of an overnight curfew.</p> <p>The island's government on Friday introduced the night-time stay-at-home order after protests against the coronavirus vaccine pass spiralled into violence the previous night.</p> <p>But the measure did little to quell the rioting.</p> <p>"The night was very turbulent," a police source said.</p> <p>The security forces recorded "some 20 incidents of looting or attempted robbery" in the seaside towns of Pointe-a-Pitre and Le Gosier, including at a jewellery shop, a bank, a betting shop and a shopping centre.</p> <p>In the town of Saint-Francois to the east, police "coming out of the station were threatened by blazing projectiles".</p> <p>A second source within the gendarmerie, the French police, said an armoury had been looted.</p> <p>The first source said "firearms were used against police forces in four different areas" across the island, and one member was slightly wounded after a stone hit him in the face.</p> <p>In the area of Le Petit-Bourg to the west, firefighters had to put out fires in two mobile phone stores, which had also been plundered.</p> <p>The interior ministry said 31 people had been arrested.</p> <p>France late Saturday said it was sending around 50 personnel from both its RAID elite police force and its GIGN counter-terrorism unit to Guadeloupe.</p> <p>The doctors' union in Guadeloupe warned against further trouble while the health system was so "fragile".</p> <p>They criticised "individuals who may have prevented patients from getting access to treatment, or medical staff from reaching their place of practice".</p>

	<p>While most people in mainland France have now received two vaccination doses, rates in its overseas territories have lagged behind.</p> <p>By November 16, some 46 per cent of adults in Guadeloupe had received at least one jab of a vaccine against Covid.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 Nebraska lowest jobless rate of any state</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/at-1-9-nebraska-now-has-the-lowest-unemployment-rate-of-any-state-ever-11637421536?mod=hp_lead_pos11">https://www.wsj.com/articles/at-1-9-nebraska-now-has-the-lowest-unemployment-rate-of-any-state-ever-11637421536?mod=hp_lead_pos11</a>
GIST	<p>Nebraska logged the lowest unemployment rate of any state on record in October, reflecting the acute labor shortages that have quickly swept across the nation amid an economic <a href="#">recovery that is without parallel</a>.</p> <p>Nebraska's unemployment rate ticked down to 1.9% last month, well below the national jobless rate of 4.6% and the lowest for state records tracing back to 1976, Labor Department data show.</p> <p>"It's a pretty historical moment," said Sinem Buber, economist at jobs site ZipRecruiter. "The unemployment rate is decreasing quite fast in the state right now."</p> <p>Nebraska's jobless rate tends to run below the national rate. Economists cite a combination of factors that have kept joblessness in the state well below the U.S. average from the onset of the pandemic. Nebraska had fewer government-imposed restrictions on business, helping it avoid steep job losses some states experienced earlier in the pandemic. The state's industry mix includes agriculture and food-processing <a href="#">jobs that were deemed essential</a>, as well as some service-sector roles in finance and insurance that were more resilient to the hit from the pandemic. Further, high-school educational attainment is relatively high, often meaning workers in the state are less likely to be unemployed.</p> <p>In some other states, including less populated areas that imposed fewer Covid-19 restrictions, many employers are struggling to fill open jobs. For instance, Utah recorded the second lowest jobless rate in October at 2.2%. Idaho, South Dakota and Oklahoma all had unemployment rates below 3% last month.</p> <p>Nebraska's <a href="#">jobless rate fell below 3%</a> in March, just about a year after rising to more than 7% at the onset of the pandemic. By comparison, it took more than five years for Nebraska's unemployment rate to notch below 3% after the 2007-09 recession.</p> <p>Labor markets in states across the U.S. tightened this year as businesses reopened, and many have struggled to find enough workers to meet surging demand. The labor shortages have resulted in some companies slashing hours or delaying production. Many workers, meanwhile, have benefited from pay increases as businesses <a href="#">compete for scarce talent</a>.</p> <p>In Nebraska, the mismatch between jobs available and people looking is particularly acute. The state of two million people has more than three job openings per job seeker, the highest ratio in the country, according to ZipRecruiter. It has 69,000 job openings, but less than a third as many people who are out of work and seeking a job.</p> <p>Nebraska tends to have a smaller pool of unemployed people than other states because the state's high-school educational attainment rates are elevated, said Eric Thompson, economics professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.</p> <p>"More educated workers, workers that are more consistently engaged in the workforce, are just less likely to be laid off and more likely to find work quickly," he said.</p>

There are also fewer people employed or looking for work in Nebraska than before the pandemic, aligning with a national trend. Nebraska's labor-force participation rate, or share of the population working or seeking a job, was 68.4% in October, down from its pre-pandemic rate of 70.3%.

Several factors are keeping individuals from seeking work in the U.S., some of which might also be deterring work searches in Nebraska. Those factors include fear of Covid-19, child-care responsibilities and a desire for work-life balance. Many people also retired early during the pandemic.

There is always churn in the labor market, helping explain why unemployment in Nebraska—and every state—can only fall so low. Economists say churn is a sign of a healthy economy. For instance, the national “quits rate,” a measurement of workers leaving jobs as a share of overall employment—was 3% in September, a record high. Economists say high quits rates oftentimes reflect worker confidence in the labor market.

Nebraska's population grew 7.4% between 2010 and 2020, at the same rate as the overall U.S. over the same period, and experienced an acceleration from 2000 to 2010, when the state's population increased by 6.7%, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

“Our population has been growing but not as fast as the demand for labor,” said David Dearmont, research administrator at the Nebraska Department of Economic Development.

Further, the state's population growth has been limited to certain areas. Only about a fourth of Nebraska's 93 counties grew from 2010 to 2020. Population gains were driven by Lancaster County—where Nebraska's capital is located—as well as Sarpy County, and Douglas County, home to the state's largest city, Omaha.

“Maybe we have trouble attracting people in from other states,” Mr. Thompson said.

Employers across the U.S. are offering higher wages and signing bonuses to lure workers. The employment-cost index, a measure of worker compensation that includes wages and benefits, rose 1.3% in the third quarter from the second, the fastest pace since at least 2001, the Labor Department reported.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 Russian vessels shadow US warships</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/putin-dispatches-russian-vessels-to-shadow-u-s-warships-during-flare-up-11637404202?mod=hp_lead_pos6">https://www.wsj.com/articles/putin-dispatches-russian-vessels-to-shadow-u-s-warships-during-flare-up-11637404202?mod=hp_lead_pos6</a>
GIST	<p>ABOARD THE USS PORTER, THE BLACK SEA—As the USS Porter entered the final hours of a transit across the Black Sea last week, an announcement came over the ship's speaker system, portending a potential threat. A Russian military helicopter was minutes away, set to join a Russian frigate and cruiser that had been shadowing the ship for days.</p> <p>Russian President <a href="#">Vladimir Putin</a> had just warned that U.S. ships in the Black Sea now were in his nation's crosshairs. “This is a serious challenge for us,” he said.</p> <p>On the Porter, a destroyer, sailors quickly filled the deck, some with long lenses mounted on cameras, all looking up to see how close the aircraft would get. With military discipline, sailors called out distances as they monitored and measured.</p> <p>Tensions were already escalating between Washington and Moscow. <a href="#">Russia had deployed ground forces</a> along Ukraine's border, raising fears within the Biden administration of a new invasion, despite Russian denials. The troop movements came alongside a migrant <a href="#">standoff on the European Union's border</a> with Belarus, a Moscow ally. And a Russian missile test recently <a href="#">spewed debris into space</a>, posing a danger to space travelers aboard the International Space Station.</p>

The heightened animosity has drawn attention to what had been close but relatively predictable encounters in the Black Sea between U.S. and allied ships and the Russian forces watching them.

The fear on the USS Porter was that tensions on the ground could lead to miscalculations at sea. U.S. officials have accused Russians of engaging in reckless operations several times in recent years. After the Russian invasion of Crimea in 2014, a Russian fighter made several close passes near a U.S. destroyer, the USS Donald Cook, as it transited the Black Sea. The Pentagon denounced the Russian maneuvers as “provocative.”

Throughout its four-day passage from Georgia to Romania, the USS Porter, a 505-foot destroyer that carries Tomahawk cruise missiles, was accompanied by the USS Mount Whitney, a larger but lesser-armed command ship, and other ships from allied countries.

Minutes after the crackling Porter loudspeakers announced the imminent arrival, a Russian tandem rotor helicopter hovered within a few scant miles of the Porter for eight minutes. The helicopter moved deliberately—and safely, according to military officials—apparently in the hope of drawing the U.S. or allies that were part of the naval mission into reacting badly. A rash reaction by a U.S. or allied ship would undermine their argument that they were properly navigating the Black Sea.

The U.S. has conducted seven such transits in the Black Sea this year, and each time Russian ships have shadowed them. The interactions between the two nations have become a kind of maritime dance. The U.S., by moving through those waters, asserts its right to transit the Black Sea. Russia, by shadowing the U.S., shows its right to watch those movements from international waters.

Both sides seek to operate—and, in some cases, intimidate—within the norms of international law. But the added tension makes both sides watch every move more closely.

Nowhere else are U.S. and allied ships shadowed so consistently, military officials say. And in no other bordering waters does Russia conduct so many shadowing missions.

On the Porter, the U.S. photographers and videographers collecting data, known as a Snoopie team—for Ship’s Nautical or Otherwise Photographic Interpretation and Examination—moved from one side of the deck to the other, taking photographs. After each click of a camera, they quickly reviewed the shots to see if they captured an identifying number or name of the Russian ships and aircraft.

Cmdr. Christopher Petro, the commander of the Porter, and Cmdr. Joe Hamilton, the ship’s executive officer, joined the sailors on the deck. Both men, having been assigned to the ship for more than a year, were there to see if this pass by the Russians would be different.

After eight minutes, the helicopter swung away from the Porter, and moved toward the Mount Whitney, leading to the most tense moment of the transit. While the Porter can carry dozens of cruise missiles, the Mount Whitney’s defenses aren’t nearly as robust, because it is a flagship, used by the commander of the fleet.

Sailors on deck announced the distances between the Porter and the helicopter as it moved toward the Mount Whitney for approximately two minutes, then moved back, before peeling away.

Despite the tension, the Russian maneuvers were “safe and professional. They are very talented pilots. They know what they are doing,” said Capt. Kyle Gantt, commander of Task Force 65, which is in charge of the destroyers operating in Europe. “Our focus is ensuring that those norms, rules and laws are abided by and are available to all of our allies and partners.”

In the Black Sea, Russian ships usually begin following the U.S. naval vessels as soon as they enter international waters, sometimes getting as close as two nautical miles. During this four-day transit, the Russians came within 1,600 yards of the Porter as it refueled, the most vulnerable part of its trip.

The U.S. heads maritime security for partners in the region. In the port city of Batumi, Georgia, the U.S. Sixth Fleet and the U.S. ambassador to Georgia earlier this month hosted a reception for Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili, whose nation depends on U.S. naval exercise since its navy was destroyed in 2008 by Russia.

“We understand the importance of sustainable Black Sea security.” Mr. Garibashvili said in an interview at the reception. “We share the responsibility for peace in the region.”

In Ukraine, U.S. officials have said they fear that construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which will carry Russian natural gas across the Baltic Sea to Germany, bypassing a transmission system through Ukraine, could make it easier for Russia to invade.

Russia has maintained that its troop movements within its own borders should be of no concern to neighbors or to the U.S.

The Kremlin called U.S. naval operations in the region destabilizing and said it considered the naval transit a potential precursor to military action by the U.S. and North Atlantic Treaty Organization. “NATO is exploring the Black Sea region as a potential theater of war,” Tass reported on Nov. 10, with a photo of a U.S. warship operating in the Black Sea.

Mr. Putin, commenting on the U.S. and allied drill, said on Nov. 14 that he was purposely showing restraint in the Black Sea, adding that Russia decided against holding its own exercises.

In the end, the U.S., ships safely arrived in Romania, concluding their exercise, and the Russian ships left as soon as the allied craft exited international waters, allowing sailors to leave the ship’s deck and resume normal duties, waiting for the next encounter so they can again watch and gauge potential Russian intent.

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HEADLINE	11/21 Companies face office reopening dilemma
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/companies-face-a-dilemma-delay-office-reopenings-again-or-take-a-new-approach-11637490601?mod=hp_lead_pos2">https://www.wsj.com/articles/companies-face-a-dilemma-delay-office-reopenings-again-or-take-a-new-approach-11637490601?mod=hp_lead_pos2</a>
GIST	<p>For much of the pandemic, a familiar ritual played out in America’s workplaces: Companies set return-to-office dates, only to later <a href="#">backtrack and delay them due to health concerns</a>.</p> <p>With <a href="#">Covid-19 cases on the rise once again</a> and U.S. authorities warning of a potential surge in infections this winter, employers find themselves questioning their approaches again.</p> <p>Companies like Apple Inc. are delaying January office returns, while others say they are sticking with their reopening targets. Some, like <a href="#">Salesforce.com</a> Inc., are abandoning dates altogether and urging managers to find ways to meet with their teams in the coming weeks. A few, like <a href="#">Allstate</a> Corp. , are telling the vast majority of workers they can stay remote permanently, while keeping some offices open for those who want to gather.</p> <p>The varied strategies reflect much continued uncertainty about the pandemic’s trajectory, along with the unclear fate of the Biden administration’s vaccine and testing mandate that has been <a href="#">temporarily blocked by a federal appeals court</a>.</p> <p><a href="#">A shift in thinking is also coloring corporate decisions</a>. Many executives increasingly say that companies, like society, might need to better live with a virus that shows no sign of disappearing. They say that means moving forward with office reopening plans or managing alternate arrangements to get teams together.</p> <p>“The pandemic is not over. It’s moving into an endemic,” said Brent Hyder, president and chief people officer of Salesforce. “The ‘return-to-office’ dates, for me, are irrelevant. I don’t understand them. We need to find ways to meet safely.”</p>

Salesforce has more than 65 open offices around the world for those who want to use them, but it has also embraced flexible and remote working, giving many teams a choice of where and how they do their jobs.

As the pandemic has stretched on, many employees have signaled in company surveys that they want some in-person time with their colleagues, even if that is brief or once a quarter. That has led to in-office meetings in places like New York or San Francisco, but also outdoor gatherings in a backyard and off-site meetings in Arizona, Mr. Hyder said.

Many executives fear that [the longer remote work lasts](#), the greater toll it can take on company culture, even as employees successfully do their jobs at home. Bosses worry staffers could become disconnected from the company without some face-to-face interaction with peers from time to time. “We have to connect as humans, and we do our best work when we figure out how to do that,” Mr. Hyder said.

Rather than force people back to offices, many companies have at least initially reopened corporate campuses on a voluntary basis, concluding that it is better to encourage people to return to in-person settings. Such a strategy is also meant to ease the transition to commuting and working next to peers in offices again, human-resources executives say.

Across the U.S., plenty of offices remain fairly empty, particularly in big cities, though occupancy has been rising in recent weeks. Offices in 10 major U.S. cities were on average 39% occupied in the week ended Nov. 10, a pandemic-era high, according to Kastle Systems, a security company that tracks access-card swipes in thousands of buildings.

At denim maker Levi Strauss & Co., the headquarters in San Francisco broadly reopened on a hybrid basis on Oct. 25. Many corporate employees generally work two or three days a week from the office, though schedules vary based on employee and team needs, a spokeswoman said.

In Europe, where cases have surged in recent weeks, the situation is different. Authorities in Belgium mandated recently that employees work four out of five days from home, affecting a large Levi office in Brussels.

A broad swath of workers remain nervous about getting sick at work. In a September survey of 2,000 U.S. workers commissioned by the insurer Prudential Financial Inc., 70% of remote workers said they worried about catching or spreading Covid-19 when returning to an office. While the outcomes for vaccinated people generally are more mild, having the illness can be disruptive, and vaccinated people can spread the virus, including to unvaccinated people at risk of worse outcomes.

A number of prominent U.S. employers that set January 2022 office return dates so far haven’t announced changes, though many companies noted that they closely watch local case rates and regulations and could still adjust course. Representatives for Wells Fargo & Co., Alphabet Inc.’s Google and Facebook owner Meta Platforms Inc. said they were still working toward planned office returns in January.

Apple has delayed its return-to-the-office plans several times. The most recent came Nov. 18, when Chief Executive Tim Cook told employees in a memo that they would return in a hybrid approach in February instead of January. The company aims to use a phased-in return one or two days a week for a month, then in March have workers in the office three days with the option for remote working on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Some companies had earlier pushed back office reopening dates, wanting time to comply with the Biden administration’s vaccine or testing mandate. Those rules, set to take full effect in early January, have been temporarily blocked by a federal appeals court. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration said on Nov. 17 that it remains “confident in its authority to protect workers in emergencies,” but said it has suspended enforcement of the new rules pending developments in the litigation.

Some companies predict parents will feel better coming back to corporate campuses once their children are inoculated. The U.S. recently approved one of the vaccines for use in children as young as 5 years old.



Genentech, a division of drugmaker Roche Holding AG, expects most of its employees to return to its headquarters near San Francisco on a hybrid schedule beginning in January. Even before that date, though, more parents might begin working from the office voluntarily as they get their kids vaccinated, said Cynthia Burks, the company's chief people and culture officer.

"I really do think we'll start to get more of an uptick of people coming to campus," she said, as parents feel "more comfortable about their family situation."

What also remains unclear is what this winter holds. Dr. Anthony Fauci, the Biden administration's chief medical adviser, said at a conference last week that the U.S. could be in for a "double whammy" of higher cases among the unvaccinated and more breakthrough infections among vaccinated Americans, unless more is done to counter the virus.

He urged cities to keep masking guidelines and other mitigation measures in place. He said the trajectory of the pandemic in the coming months will depend on whether the roughly 60 million unvaccinated Americans get shots, along with the success of booster campaigns to help those already inoculated. "If we don't do that," he said at the STAT Summit, "I think we're in for some trouble."

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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Global supply-chain problems easing?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/supply-chain-problems-show-signs-of-easing-11637496002?mod=hp_lead_pos1">https://www.wsj.com/articles/supply-chain-problems-show-signs-of-easing-11637496002?mod=hp_lead_pos1</a>
GIST	<p>Global supply-chain woes are beginning to recede, but shipping, manufacturing and retail executives say that they don't expect a return to more-normal operations until next year and that cargo will continue to be delayed if Covid-19 outbreaks disrupt key distribution hubs.</p> <p>In Asia, Covid-related factory closures, energy shortages and port-capacity limits <a href="#">have eased in recent weeks</a>. In the U.S., major retailers say they have imported most of what they need for the holidays. <a href="#">Ocean freight rates</a> have retreated from record levels.</p> <p>Still, executives and economists say strong consumer demand for goods in the West, ongoing port congestion in the U.S., shortages of truck drivers and elevated global freight rates continue to hang over any recovery. The risk of more extreme weather and flare-ups of Covid-19 cases can also threaten to clog up supply chains again.</p> <p>An easing of supply-chain choke points would allow production to move toward meeting strong demand and would lower logistics costs. If sustained, that, in turn, would help alleviate <a href="#">the upward pressure on inflation</a>.</p> <p>The number of ships waiting to unload at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, the biggest U.S. gateway for imports from Asia, has improved but is still hovering near record levels. There were 71 container ships anchored offshore on Nov. 19, down from a peak of 86 three days before, according to the Marine Exchange of Southern California, and 17 more were expected to arrive within three days. Before the pandemic, it was unusual for any ships to anchor offshore.</p> <p>Shipping and retail executives say they expect the U.S. port backlogs to clear in early 2022, after the holiday shopping season and when Lunar New Year shuts many factories for a week in February, slowing output.</p> <p>German shipowner Jan Held said congestion, particularly in Asia, is getting better. His ships transport mainly industrial goods, like giant windmills, rather than containers, but would sometimes spend a month waiting outside of Asian ports.</p>



Mr. Held said it would be some time before the global transport system normalizes. “For that, the pandemic has to end and that is not happening any time soon, in my opinion,” said Mr. Held, co-owner of Held Bereederungs GmbH & Co. KG, based in the north German city of Haren.

Trans-Pacific freight rates have cooled in recent weeks as most big U.S. retailers have imported what they need for the holiday season, gradually opening up space on the front end of the trip. The cost to move a container across the Pacific fell by more than a quarter in the week ended Nov. 12, the biggest decline in two years. Rates rose about 5% this week to about \$14,700 per 40-foot container and are still more than three times year-ago levels, according to the Freightos Baltic Index.

“Globally speaking, the worst is behind us in terms of the supply-chain problems,” said Louis Kuijs, head of Asia economics at Oxford Economics. A survey by the research house among what it described as “country experts” covering 45 economies found that almost all believe supply-chain disruptions have peaked or will peak in the last quarter of this year.

Any hiccups, such as a repeat of [the temporary closure of China’s Ningbo-Zhoushan Port](#) in August due to a single Covid-19 infection, could send freight rates soaring again.

Many big chains, including [Walmart](#) Inc., [Home Depot](#) Inc. and [Target](#) Corp. , said this past week they are [well stocked for the holidays](#), mainly because they imported goods earlier than usual this year. Some also [chartered their own ships](#) to get around bottlenecks.

Few executives said their problems are over, and in the most recent round of results, global companies continued to cite issues at ports and roads around the world. Several retailers reported lower profit margins, citing elevated freight costs to move their goods.

For Christine Humphreys, there seems to be no easing of the supply-chain chaos that means her U.K. drinks company has only half its stock for Christmas, her busiest period.

Journeys from Germany to the U.K. that would have taken two weeks are now taking six, said Ms. Humphreys, a co-founder of the Mindful Drinking Company Ltd. “Come on, it’s not a million miles away, it’s only across the water,” she said.

After slowdowns in production in recent months due to Covid-19 outbreaks, output at factories across Malaysia, Vietnam and other countries rebounded over the past month as Covid-19 cases declined and production limits were lifted, easing some bottlenecks that have [choked output of semiconductors](#) and textiles globally.

“It’s a huge change in a positive way as it should improve industrial output in Asia and global supply,” said Trinh Nguyen, senior economist at Natixis in Hong Kong. Still, she cautions that many countries continue to grapple with other problems, like shortages of workers.

“There are certain aspects of supply-chain shocks that are easing, but the shortage issue isn’t going to completely disappear,” she said.

In Vietnam, factory owners in the country’s southern manufacturing hub said production is far smoother than it was several months ago, but [challenges remain](#), including high shipping costs and labor shortages, as many workers that had returned to their villages during the Covid-19 wave have yet to return.

Do Xuan Lap, the head of Vietnam’s Timber and Forest Products Association, said that the situation is improving and that medium-size furniture factories, with around 200 to 500 workers, are operating at around 80% capacity. But larger furniture makers, with up to 3,000 workers, were missing more laborers and operating at around 65% capacity.

In China, a power crunch that hit the country’s manufacturing hubs earlier this fall has eased in recent weeks after authorities allowed coal-fired power plants to charge higher prices. Previously, some plants

were curbing power output. Oil prices, too, have pulled back after hitting their highest level since the 2014 energy bust.

Manufacturing production has largely resumed at normal capacity since October, according to interviews with several factory owners based in China's southern manufacturing hub of Guangdong.

Shortages of shipping containers also appear to be easing.

Thomas Broertjes, managing director of Foshan Oufeng Furniture Co. based in Guangdong province, said that in September, he wasn't able to ship any products because he was unable to secure space on even a single shipping container that month. "That was really the lowest point," he said.

While the company has been able to book more containers since October, it still takes days until it can confirm bookings with vendors. Prices remain three or four times what he paid before 2020. "I'm hopeful that things are getting better. It couldn't get worse," he said, though he added, "it's still a big hassle."

Other factory owners say they are still struggling to deal with bottlenecks. Since this June, boxes filled with auto parts began to pile up at the warehouse of Zhejiang Songtian Automotive Motor System Co. as more importers from the West held off on taking delivery amid soaring freight rates. The company recently repurposed sections of a new factory to store products.

"The entire factory is now filled with finished goods that couldn't be shipped out. This is our biggest headache at the moment, and there's nothing we can do about it," said Dai Xuezhi, chief executive of the company based in the southeastern Chinese city of Wenzhou.

Data provider eeSea says containership delays fell in October from September, but there hasn't been much change when it comes to the vessels waiting outside of ports in November. As of Friday morning, there were 500 large container ships waiting to dock outside ports in Asia, Europe and North America, up slightly from the 497 vessels that waited on Oct. 8.

In the U.S., the destination for many of the goods made in Asian factories, there are few signs that the gridlock is easing.

Freight railroads recently lifted their limits on inbound cargo into congested container terminals in the Chicago area. But boxes are still swamping the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, and shipping executives note the backlog of vessels offshore suggests the flow of inbound shipments isn't letting up.

"We are still in the thick of it," said Alan McCorkle, chief executive of Yusen Terminals LLC, at the Port of Los Angeles.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 Infections rising again; upper Midwest spike</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/20/us-covid-infections-rise-upper-midwest">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/20/us-covid-infections-rise-upper-midwest</a>
GIST	<p>America's Covid-19 infections are climbing again, and could soon hit a weekly average of 100,000 cases a day as daily case reports increase more than 20% across the upper midwest.</p> <p>The fresh worsening of the coronavirus pandemic in the US comes as temperatures cool during the approach of winter, forcing people indoors where the virus is believed to spread more readily and may presage another wave.</p> <p>It is also happening ahead of the Thanksgiving national holiday where tens of millions of Americans are expected to travel all over the country as families gather together in homes for the annual feast.</p>

With medical authorities struggling to get adult vaccination rates above 60% nationally, the states first to experience the onset of winter – Michigan and Minnesota – lead the country “by a significant margin in recent cases per capita”, according to [analysis](#) by the New York Times.

The seven-day moving average for the US was 93,196 on Friday. On October 25 it had been 70,271.

However, as federal medical workers travel to [Minnesota](#) to support hospital response to the increase in cases, the country as a whole is still averaging far fewer cases a day than it did during the worst of the summer’s Delta variant surge. People who are fully vaccinated are also far less likely to be hospitalized – and very unlikely to die – even if they are infected with the virus.

But several states with high rates of early vaccination take-up, including New Mexico, New Hampshire and Vermont, are also reporting elevated Covid case levels, suggesting that the efficacy of vaccines may be diminishing in terms of infection.

After federal health authorities approved booster shots and vaccines for five-12 year-olds, the US is administering about 1.5m new doses a day, with a gently rising graph of vaccination rates still around 15 percentage points below the 80% threshold that epidemiologists would like to see.

On Friday, the FDA approved booster shots to all adults and took the extra step of urging people 50 and older to seek one. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) agreed to the new policy.

Under the new rules, anyone 18 or older can choose either a Pfizer or Moderna booster six months after their last dose. For anyone who got the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine, the wait already was just two months. “We heard loud and clear that people needed something simpler and this, I think, is simple,” FDA vaccine chief Dr Peter Marks told the Associated Press.

Around a dozen states had already made boosters available to all adults. “The direction is not a good one. People are going inside more and, ‘oops,’ next week happens to be the largest travel week of the year, so it probably makes sense to do whatever we can here to try to turn the tide,” Marks added.

Some experts worry that placing attention on boosters may harm efforts to reach the 47m US adults who remain unvaccinated and widen disparities between wealthy nations and poorer countries who have not been able to acquire sufficient vaccines to treat more than a fraction of their populations.

The rise in new US infections come as several European countries are reporting a brutal resurgence of the coronavirus pandemic. New infections are at record levels in some countries and Austria will reimpose a nationwide lockdown next week, while Germany is clamping down on unvaccinated people and has not ruled out imposing new restrictions on movement.

The European trend toward tighter controls, from mask mandates in Spain to a partial lockdown in the Netherlands, has also led to some outbreaks of unrest.

Violent demonstrations broke out in Rotterdam on Friday night over the Netherlands’ proposals to exclude negative tests from the national health pass, with police [firing warning shots](#) and breaking up crowds of protesters with water cannon. At least seven injuries were reported.

In the US, preparations for the Thanksgiving holiday next week hit new complications with reports of a shortage of Covid-19 home testing kits – a supplementary precaution for family members planning to come together for the first time in two years.

Distributors have reported kit shortages, though pharmacy chains like CVS and Walgreens now say they have ample supplies as manufacturers, supported by more than \$3bn in government spending, have increased production.

However, health experts have also warned that a new surge of the virus could overwhelm supplies, especially if holiday gatherings and cooler temperatures spark new outbreaks across the country.

The number of US Covid-19 deaths recorded in 2021 has now surpassed the toll in 2020, according to federal data and Johns Hopkins University compiled Saturday and published [in the Wall Street Journal](#). The total number of reported US deaths linked to the disease now surpasses 770,780: more than twice the 385,343 Covid-19 deaths recorded in 2020.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 Poland: Belarus changed border tactics</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/20/poland-says-belarus-changed-tactics-border-crisis-migrants">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/20/poland-says-belarus-changed-tactics-border-crisis-migrants</a>
GIST	<p>Poland has said Belarus has changed tactics in the border crisis by now directing smaller groups of people to multiple points along the European Union's eastern frontier.</p> <p>Though there have been signs of the crisis easing, the defence minister, Mariusz Błaszczak, said he expected the border showdown to continue for some time.</p> <p>Polish border guards reported new attempted crossings by several groups mostly consisting of dozens of people, although there was one crowd of 200 people hurling rocks and using teargas.</p> <p>"We have to prepare for the fact that this problem will continue for months. I have no doubt that that will be the case," Błaszczak told the commercial RMF FM radio station.</p> <p>"Now a bit of a new method has been taken on by the migrants and Belarusian services ... Smaller groups of people are trying to cross the border in many places," he said.</p> <p>He added that "there is no question that these attacks are directed by Belarusian services".</p> <p>The west accuses Belarus of artificially creating the crisis by bringing in people – mostly from the Middle East – and taking them to the border with promises of an easy crossing into the EU.</p> <p>Belarus has denied the claim, instead criticising the EU for not taking in the migrants.</p> <p>The Belarusian president, Alexander Lukashenko, told the BBC on Friday that it was "absolutely possible" his forces had helped people cross into the EU but denied orchestrating the operation.</p> <p>"We're Slavs. We have hearts. Our troops know the migrants are going to Germany... Maybe someone helped them," he said. "But I didn't invite them here."</p> <p>There were indications this week that the crisis was abating after several hundred people were repatriated to Iraq, while 2,000 others left a makeshift border encampment for a nearby warehouse.</p> <p>Poland's border guards said that on Friday there had been 195 attempted illegal crossings.</p> <p>"Eighty-two foreigners were ordered to leave Polish territory. Two Ukrainian citizens and one German citizen were detained for aiding and abetting," the guards tweeted on Saturday.</p> <p>They added that there were multiple attempts to cross at the stretch of border guarded by the unit in the eastern village of Dubicze Cerkiewne.</p> <p>"The largest group consisted of around 200 foreigners, the others each numbered several dozen people," the guards tweeted. "The foreigners were aggressive – they threw rocks, firecrackers and used teargas."</p> <p>Many of the people hoping to reach the EU have spent thousands of dollars to fly into Belarus on tourist visas, with the hope of then crossing the border.</p>

	<p>On Friday the Council of Europe human rights commissioner, Dunja Mijatović, called the humanitarian situation along the border “alarming” and demanded an end to Poland’s controversial returns of migrants to Belarus.</p> <p>“I have personally listened to the appalling accounts of extreme suffering from desperate people... who spent weeks or even months in squalid and extreme conditions in the cold and wet woods due to these pushbacks,” she said.</p> <p>“All pushbacks must end immediately.”</p> <p>Polish mothers have planned a rally for migrant rights on Saturday in the eastern town of Hajnówka.</p> <p>Polish media say at least 11 people have died since the crisis began over the summer.</p> <p>Poland held a burial for a Syrian teenager who drowned in the Bug River on the border – this week and two other funerals are planned for the weekend.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Delta the last Covid ‘super variant’?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/21/is-delta-the-last-covid-super-variant">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/21/is-delta-the-last-covid-super-variant</a>
GIST	<p>Every week, a group of epidemiologists across the north-east of the United States joins a Zoom call entirely devoted to discussing the latest hints of new <a href="#">Covid-19</a> variants being reported around the world.</p> <p>“It’s like the weather report,” says William Hanage, an epidemiologist at the Harvard TH Chan School of Public <a href="#">Health</a>. “It used to be, ‘We have a little bit of Gamma there, we’ve got Alpha coming up here.’ But now it’s just Delta.”</p> <p>Since it was first detected in India in December 2020, the Delta variant of Sars-CoV-2 has become so ubiquitous that it would be easy to assume that the once-rapid evolution of the virus has been replaced by a state of quiescence. According to the World Health Organization, <a href="#">99.5% of all Covid-19 genomic sequences</a> reported to public databases are now Delta.</p> <p>While new strains have continued to emerge, such as the recent AY. 4.2 or the <a href="#">Delta Plus</a> variant in the UK, which <a href="#">scientists estimate</a> to be 10-15% more transmissible, although there is no exact data for this yet, they are almost identical to the Delta variant, apart from the odd minor mutation here and there. Hanage has taken to referring to them as Delta’s grandchildren.</p> <p>“There’s been quite a few Delta Pluses,” he says. “I did a recent radio interview where I said that Delta Plus is code for whatever people are getting their knickers in a twist about at the moment. It’s not gigantically more transmissible.”</p> <p>But the reason Hanage and colleagues still scan databases such as <a href="#">Pangolin</a> and <a href="#">Nextstrain</a> each week, and the purpose of their regular Zoom calls, is to try and predict what might come next. Is Delta really Covid-19’s endgame or is something more ominous looming in the future? It is a question to which no one is entirely sure of the answer.</p> <p>One possibility is that after the initial dramatic jumps in its genetic sequence, which gave rise to first Alpha, then Delta, Sars-CoV-2 will now mutate slowly and steadily, eventually moving beyond reach of the current vaccines, but only over the course of many years. While scientists are at pains to point out that their predictions are mostly informed speculation, some perceive this as the most likely outcome.</p> <p>“I anticipate that the kind of evolution we will see is more what we call antigenic drift, where the virus gradually evolves to escape the immune system,” says Francois Balloux, director of the UCL Genetics</p>

Institute. “For influenza and other coronaviruses we know quite well, it takes about 10 years for the virus to accumulate enough changes not to be recognised by antibodies in the blood.”

But the alternative is the sudden appearance of a completely new strain, with game-changing transmissibility, virulence or immune-evasive properties. [Ravi Gupta](#), professor of clinical microbiology at the University of Cambridge, refers to these strains as “super variants” and says he is 80% sure that another one will emerge. The question is when.

“We’ve got a Delta pandemic at the moment,” says Gupta. “This new Delta Plus variant is relatively wimpy compared to the kind of thing I’m talking about. It has two mutations from the Delta strain, I don’t think they are that worrisome and it hasn’t taken off in a big way in other countries. But it’s inevitable that there will be another significant variant in the next two years and it will compete with Delta and it may out-compete Delta.”

There are a number of ways in which this might arise.

### **Will we see a super variant?**

During the latter half of 2020, epidemiologists began to observe signs of a concerning phenomenon known as viral recombination, in which different versions of Sars-CoV-2 exchanged mutations and combined to form a totally new strain.

Thankfully, Gupta says recombination does not appear to be that common, but it remains one feasible source of a new super variant, particularly in parts of the world where sizable proportions of the population remain unvaccinated and viral strains can circulate freely. “Now that Delta is overwhelmingly the key virus, this has become less likely,” he says. “But there are large swaths of the planet that we’re not sampling and we don’t know what’s going on. So it is a very real possibility.”

The second is a series of major mutations, either resulting in a greatly enhanced version of Delta or something very different. It is thought there remains significant scope for this to happen. “While recent variants are versions of Delta, the virus has huge potential to evolve in the future,” says [Gideon Schreiber](#), professor of biomolecular sciences at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel. “More complex mutations can evolve, with simultaneous mutations at more than one position, which may be more problematic.”

In recent weeks, concerns have emerged that the use of new antiviral pills, in particular Merck’s [molnupiravir](#), could contribute to this by actively encouraging Sars-CoV-2 to evolve. Molnupiravir works by interfering with the virus’s ability to replicate, littering its genome with mutations until it can no longer reproduce. [Some virologists have argued](#) that if any of these viral mutants survive and spread to others, it could theoretically spur the rise of new variants. Others acknowledge that while this is worth monitoring, it is not enough of a concern to deny severely ill patients a potentially lifesaving drug.

Gupta says that a greater problem, and one more likely to lead to a super variant, is the persistently high infection rate in countries such as the UK, due to the ability of Delta to transmit between vaccinated individuals. “The more infections there are per day, the more chance that there is someone out there, a patient X, who gets infected and their T-cells are not strong enough to clear the infection because they’re immune-suppressed,” he says. “So they end up having the infection over a number of days; they’ve got some antibodies knocking around because they’ve had a partial vaccine response and the virus learns to evade them and then that spills out.”

Earlier this year, Gupta published [a paper](#) that showed that this process could occur in severely ill patients who had been administered convalescent plasma laden with virus-killing antibodies. Because their immune system still couldn’t clear the virus, it learned to mutate around those antibodies. It has been speculated that the widespread use of convalescent plasma early in the pandemic was responsible for driving the emergence of variants.



“We don’t know for sure, but a lot of plasma was used and it was potentially one of the drivers for the variants,” he says. “It was used very widely in Brazil, India, the UK and the US, all of whom developed their own sets of variants.”

### **The vaccine-variant arms race**

Epidemiologists are now trying to model what a new super variant might look like. So far, the major transformations in the virus have helped to increase its transmissibility. Hanage explains that one of the reasons why the Delta variant had such an impact is because it grows extremely rapidly within human cells, before the immune system kicks into gear. As a result, people infected with Delta carry [approximately 1,200 times](#) more viral particles in their noses compared with the original Sars-CoV-2 strain and develop symptoms two to three days sooner.

This is a result of natural selection. Different copies of the virus are being created all the time, but the ones that have survived and become more dominant are ones that are more capable of infecting new people. However, in countries such the UK, where the unvaccinated proportion of the population is diminishing, this could start to change. Strains that can sidestep antibodies are likely to become more dominant, making the next super variant far more likely to be able to evade at least some parts of the immune response.

“The strains of the virus that end up surviving and becoming dominant vary, depending on which stage of the pandemic you’re in,” says Hanage. “So far, it’s been much more important for the virus to be transmitting effectively into the remaining pool of unprotected people. But that is expected to change around about now.”

While this might sound a little terrifying, it’s not all bad news. Because the Covid-19 vaccines are designed with viral evolution in mind, epidemiologists do not expect any new super variant to render them completely useless and so it would be extremely unlikely to lead to large serious outbreaks, such as those of the past two years.

In addition, there is a second generation of Covid-19 vaccines that have been developed. Vaccine developer Novavax is hoping to obtain regulatory approval for its jabs in the next couple of months, while many more vaccines are expected to come on the market between now and 2023. These platforms are all taking their own steps to combat potential future variants.

According to Karin Jooss, executive vice-president and head of R&D at US pharmaceutical company Gritstone, which has a second-generation Covid-19 vaccine in phase I clinical trials, companies are sequencing all existing strains of Sars-CoV-2 and aiming to generate neutralising antibody responses against areas of the virus that are conserved between all those strains.

But epidemiologists also believe that relying on vaccines alone is not enough. Gupta says that even as we attempt to find a way to live with Covid-19 in the UK, there should still be some restrictions in place to limit the spread of the virus and reduce the number of opportunities it gets to mutate.

“The case numbers are so high at the moment that it’s much better to prevent new infections,” says Gupta. “In other words, we shouldn’t be wandering around in crowded places, in buildings without masks on, even though it’s hard to do. If you look at the variants we’ve had, they have all emerged in countries with very high, uncontrolled transmission – India, the UK, Brazil. There’s a reason why we haven’t heard of a Singaporean or South Korean variant.”

It is a philosophy many of his colleagues agree with. “You want to limit the number of opportunities that the virus gets to roll the dice,” says Hanage. “With natural selection, you’re basically talking about the most creative force that we know of when it comes to solving problems. It’s amazing. And so this is why you’d never bet against it. We expect the virus to keep evolving.”

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HEADLINE	11/20 WHO: Europe 500K more deaths by Mar.
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/20/covid-deaths-europe-who-warning-">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/20/covid-deaths-europe-who-warning-</a>



GIST	<p>The <a href="#">World Health Organization</a> has said another 500,000 people in Europe could die of Covid by March next year unless urgent action is taken.</p> <p>The WHO's Europe director, Dr Hans Kluge, said he was very worried about a fresh wave of infections that had spread across the continent and led countries to announce new restrictions.</p> <p>Austria announced this week that it would become the first country to <a href="#">legally require people to have the vaccines</a> from February. It has the lowest vaccination rate in western Europe, and recorded another 15,809 cases on Friday.</p> <p>The country will go into a full lockdown for the third time on Monday until at least 12 December. Tighter restrictions have also been announced in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.</p> <p>Kluge said factors such as the winter season, when there is normally an increase in viral infections, and low vaccine coverage were responsible for the increase in cases. He called for more people to get vaccinated, basic public health measures to be implemented and new treatments to be developed, but said mandatory vaccination should be the last resort.</p> <p>"Covid-19 has become once again the number one cause of mortality in our region," he told the BBC. "We know what needs to be done" to fight the disease.</p> <p>Rioting erupted in the Netherlands on Friday in response to new Covid restrictions. Police opened fire on protesters and seven people were injured <a href="#">during a demonstration in Rotterdam</a>.</p> <p>The German health minister, Jens Spahn, said the situation in the country was a "national emergency" and would not rule out another national lockdown. <a href="#">Christmas markets were cancelled</a> in the south-eastern state of Bavaria, which has some of the lowest vaccination rates in the country.</p> <p>The UK's rolling seven-day average of daily new coronavirus cases is higher than EU countries, and has been since June. Other EU members, including Ireland, Hungary, Greece and the Baltic states have higher infection rates than the UK's, but many with high vaccination rates and stricter social distancing rules do not.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 Europe: vaccinated against unvaccinated</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/20/europes-covid-crisis-pits-vaccinated-against-unvac/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/20/europes-covid-crisis-pits-vaccinated-against-unvac/</a>
GIST	<p>BRUSSELS (AP) — This was supposed to be the Christmas in Europe where family and friends could once again embrace holiday festivities and one another. Instead, the continent is the global epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic as cases soar to record levels in many countries.</p> <p>With infections spiking again despite nearly two years of restrictions, the health crisis increasingly is pitting citizen against citizen - the vaccinated against the unvaccinated.</p> <p>Governments desperate to shield overburdened healthcare systems are imposing rules that limit choices for the unvaccinated in the hope that doing so will drive up rates of vaccinations.</p> <p>Austria on Friday went a step further, making vaccinations mandatory as of Feb. 1.</p> <p>"For a long time, maybe too long, I and others thought that it must be possible to convince people in Austria, to convince them to get vaccinated voluntarily," Austrian Chancellor Alexander Schallenberg said.</p> <p>He called the move "our only way to break out of this vicious cycle of viral waves and lockdown discussions for good."</p>

While Austria so far stands alone in the European Union in making vaccinations mandatory, more and more governments are clamping down.

Starting Monday, Slovakia is banning people who haven't been vaccinated from all nonessential stores and shopping malls. They also will not be allowed to attend any public event or gathering and will be required to test twice a week just to go to work.

"A merry Christmas does not mean a Christmas without COVID-19," warned Prime Minister Eduard Heger. "For that to happen, Slovakia would need to have a completely different vaccination rate."

He called the measures "a lockdown for the unvaccinated."

Slovakia, where just 45.3% of the 5.5 million population is fully vaccinated, reported a record 8,342 new virus cases on Tuesday.

It is not only nations of central and eastern Europe that are suffering anew. Wealthy nations in the west also are being hit hard and imposing restrictions on their populations once again.

"It is really, absolutely, time to take action," German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Thursday. With a vaccination rate of 67.5%, her nation is now considering mandatory vaccinations for many health professionals.

Greece, too, is targeting the unvaccinated. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis announced a battery of new restrictions late Thursday for the unvaccinated, keeping them out of venues including bars, restaurants, cinemas, theaters, museums and gyms, even if they have tested negative.

"It is an immediate act of protection and, of course, an indirect urge to be vaccinated," Mitsotakis said.

The restrictions enrage Clare Daly, an Irish EU legislator who is a member of the European parliament's civil liberties and justice committee. She argues that nations are trampling individual rights.

"In a whole number of cases, member states are excluding people from their ability to go to work," Daly said, calling Austria's restrictions on the unvaccinated that preceded its decision Friday to impose a full lockdown "a frightening scenario."

Even in Ireland, where 75.9 % of the population are fully vaccinated, she feels a backlash against holdouts.

"There's almost a sort of hate speech being whipped up against the unvaccinated," she said.

The world has had a history of mandatory vaccines in many nations for diseases such as smallpox and polio. Yet despite a global COVID-19 death toll exceeding 5 million, despite overwhelming medical evidence that vaccines highly protect against death or serious illness from COVID-19 and slow the pandemic's spread, opposition to vaccinations remains stubbornly strong among parts of the population.

Some 10,000 people, chanting "freedom, freedom," gathered in Prague this week to protest Czech government restrictions imposed on the unvaccinated.

"No single individual freedom is absolute," countered Professor Paul De Grauwe of the London School of Economics. "The freedom not to be vaccinated needs to be limited to guarantee the freedom of others to enjoy good health," he wrote for the liberal think tank Liberales.

That principle is now turning friends away from each other and splitting families across European nations.

Birgitte Schoenmakers, a general practitioner and professor at Leuven University, sees it on an almost daily basis.

	<p>“It has turned into a battle between the people,” she said.</p> <p>She sees political conflicts whipped up by people willfully spreading conspiracy theories, but also intensely human stories. One of her patients has been locked out of the home of her parents because she dreads being vaccinated.</p> <p>Schoemakers said that while authorities had long balked at the idea of mandatory vaccinations, the highly infectious delta variant is changing minds.</p> <p>“To make a U-turn on this is incredibly difficult,” she said.</p> <p>Spiking infections and measures to rein them in are combining to usher in a second straight grim holiday season in Europe.</p> <p>Leuven has already canceled its Christmas market, while in nearby Brussels a 60-foot Christmas tree was placed in the center of the city’s stunning Grand Place on Thursday but a decision on whether the Belgian capital’s festive market can go ahead will depend on the development of the virus surge.</p> <p>Paul Vierendeels, who donated the tree, hopes for a return to a semblance of a traditional Christmas.</p> <p>“We are glad to see they are making the effort to put up the tree, decorate it. It is a start,” he said. “After almost two difficult years, I think it is a good thing that some things, more normal in life, are taking place again.”</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>11/20 Protests erupt after Rittenhouse acquittal</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/20/protests-explode-across-country-after-rittenhouse/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/20/protests-explode-across-country-after-rittenhouse-/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>Protests erupted in major U.S. cities on Friday night and Saturday, following the news that 18-year-old Kyle Rittenhouse was acquitted over the killing of two people last year.</p> <p>Portland, New York City, Chicago, and Oakland all saw demonstrations explode following the verdict of Mr. Rittenhouse, whom a jury found was acting in self-defense when he shot three men during protests in Kenosha, Wisconsin last year.</p> <p>The New York City Police Department tweeted two photos showing vandalized cars. One image had a car with its windows smashed in, and the other had spray paint with the words “f**k you” written on the trunk.</p> <p>“The NYPD takes its responsibility to protect the first amendment rights of peaceful demonstrators seriously,” the department tweeted. “Just as important is the safety of NYers &amp; the protection of property from people breaking the law in the name of protest. As seen tonight in Queens, they will be arrested.”</p> <p>Portland police declared a riot in the city’s downtown area, after protesters became violent there.</p> <p>Some demonstrators smashed the windows of local businesses and a police vehicle. The Portland Police Bureau’s downtown precinct was also vandalized.</p> <p>In Oakland protesters marched through the streets, shouting “Revolution, nothing else!”</p> <p>“This verdict... is a green light to any coward, every want-to-be white supremacist vigilante,” one activist told KGO-TV of San Francisco.</p> <p>The Party for Socialism and Liberation organized a Chicago rally, prompting Mayor Lori Lightfoot to issue a statement on the need to respect the jury’s decision.</p>

	<p>“Under our constitutional system, we must respect the jury’s decision,” Ms. Lightfoot said.</p> <p>Mr. Rittenhouse, of Illinois, shot and killed two people and injured one other amid protests that followed the police shooting of Jacob Blake.</p> <p>President Biden said he was “angry and concerned” over the verdict, but said he believed in the integrity of the jury system.</p> <p>Mr. Rittenhouse said he believed the jury made the right decision in clearing him of all criminal charges.</p> <p>“The jury reached the correct verdict,” Mr. Rittenhouse told Fox News. “Self-defense is not illegal. I believe they came to the correct verdict, and I’m glad that everything went well.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 As Haiti crisis worsens more flee by sea</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/11/20/haiti-dangerous-sea-voyages/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/11/20/haiti-dangerous-sea-voyages/</a>
GIST	<p>PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — There was nothing but darkness around them. Darkness and desperation.</p> <p>“We are lost,” the captain told four dozen men, women and children squeezed tightly together on a flimsy wooden boat somewhere in the Caribbean Sea. “There is no hope.”</p> <p>Jeff Pierre thought of the 2-year-old son he left back in Haiti. He imagined what it would be like for the boy to grow up without a father and started crying.</p> <p>It had been four days since the boat set sail from Jérémie, a coastal city near the tip of Haiti’s southern peninsula, in late September. All those aboard had managed to scrounge together \$250 for the trip to the United States — a small fortune in a country where a majority of the population lives on less than \$2 a day.</p> <p>Frustrated by Haiti’s rising gang violence, political turmoil and dire economy, they’d decided to take the ultimate risk: embarking on a perilous journey by sea that has claimed the lives of an untold number of migrants.</p> <p>“I said to myself, ‘I need to leave,’” Pierre said. “This country does not offer me anything.”</p> <p>Though much attention has been paid to the swell of Haitians who arrived at the U.S.-Mexico border in September, another, less visible spike in migration has been taking place by sea as the nation’s humanitarian and political crisis deepens.</p> <p>As of October, the U.S. Coast Guard had intercepted over 1,500 Haitians at sea in the previous 12 months — three times the number seen in 2020 and the highest on record in at least five years. Officers have found vessels carrying upward of 200 people on precarious boats en route to the Bahamas, Puerto Rico and the United States. Hundreds have been caught after reaching islands in the Caribbean, where watchdog groups have reported migrants are being held in inhumane conditions before being deported.</p> <p>The massive flight of Haitians by sea, air and land has now begun to have regional implications around the Caribbean and Latin America, prompting several nations to impose new, strict requirements for migrants and to expedite deportations. As the Haitians’ options narrow, advocates say they’re opting for riskier journeys.</p> <p>“This is not stopping,” said Giuseppe Loprete, the International Organization for Migration chief of mission in Haiti. “We will see migrants going in one direction or another, as the situation here will not get any better anytime soon.”</p>

As the Haitians who departed from Jérémie drifted in the middle of the Caribbean, water began to leak onto the boat. Women started to cry. A man chanted a Christian prayer and soon others joined in. Together, they tried to scoop out the water spilling onto the boat with plastic bottles.

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Haitians have been migrating by land and sea since the earliest days of the nation, fleeing political turmoil and searching for opportunity. Hundreds of thousands escaped the brutal rule of the Duvalier family from 1957 to 1986 and again after the overthrow of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 2004. After a 7.0-magnitude earthquake struck Haiti in 2010, leaving more than 220,000 dead, thousands more resettled in South America, where many found stable jobs and housing.

Now a twofold migration has emerged: Thousands are fleeing from South American nations such as Chile amid a steep economic downturn, tougher visa requirements and a belief that the United States has grown more welcoming to immigrants under President Biden. In September, 17,638 Haitians were taken into custody by U.S. Customs and Border Protection, after many of them huddled in a squalid camp under a bridge in Del Rio, Tex., creating a humanitarian and political crisis for the Biden administration. Those numbers have since declined. Meanwhile, many still in Haiti are looking to escape the nation's recent tumult.

In July, President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated at his home in the middle of the night. A month later, an earthquake took the lives of at least 2,189 people and damaged or destroyed 137,000 homes. Powerful gangs routinely block ports and hold up trucks in the capital at will, causing paralyzing fuel shortages. Men, women and children are taken hostage by gangs and ask families for ransom. Some are killed if their families do not pay. The country now has the highest per capita kidnapping rate on Earth.

All of these factors have pushed Haitians to set out on *kanntè* — a Creole word used to describe the act of leaving Haiti by boat to illegally enter other countries, most commonly the United States.

Evens Louis Jeune, a 44-year-old fisherman from Jérémie, said he decided in September that he'd had enough. Fuel shortages had grounded already scarce work to a halt. With five children to feed, he decided he'd use the boat he usually works to transport cement and salt for something else: trying to reach the United States.

"The country is in a catastrophic situation," he said. "That convinced me I had to leave."

Quietly, he began spreading the word in Jérémie, a metropolis known as the "city of poets" that is still recovering from the most recent quake. Fallen brick and concrete from destroyed buildings litter many streets three months later. The main bridge that connects the city to the rest of the country is on the brink of collapse.

About 50 Haitians managed to raise 25,000 gourdes — about \$250 — for a spot on his battered wooden boat, parts of which were rotting. Some sold their belongings. Others negotiated payment plans or asked for loans — routine practices to survive in Haiti, the poorest country in Latin America and the Caribbean region.

Pierre, an electrician, learned about the trip when he saw Jeune buying water and fuel at a local shop. The 31-year-old man had been struggling to support his son, mother and partner by selling clothes. In recent months, it had become impossible to travel to Port-au-Prince to buy merchandise to sell or look for work. Armed gangs controlled some of the highways and entry points to the capital, making the six-hour journey a risky gamble.

"You can't even eat," he said. "My only option was to leave."

As he prepared for the journey, he tried explaining to his son why he was going, unsure if they'd see each other again.

“Your father is leaving Haiti, seeking a better life for us,” he said, caressing the boy’s face.

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Most Haitians fleeing by sea are using makeshift vessels — some built with their own hands — that are by and large unequipped to navigate bad weather and rough currents. They typically carry little or no lifesaving equipment onboard.

The captains follow maritime routes that have been used for decades: Sailing north to the Bahamas or Turks and Caicos, or east toward Puerto Rico, stopping points on the journey to the United States and sometimes permanent destinations in and of themselves. Others try to reach Florida directly, a journey that can take about six days if all goes according to plan.

The boats often sail through treacherous channels such as the Mona Passage, which lies between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico and is filled with tidal currents and sand banks, making it one of the most dangerous straits in the Caribbean.

The U.S. Coast Guard has intercepted a rising number of Haitians in recent years. The more than 1,500 found at sea while patrolling the waters around Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Bahamas over the last year represent a marked increase from 2020, when 418 were located — a number considered especially low because of the pandemic. As a result, the Coast Guard has increased the number of crews patrolling by air and sea, Petty Officer Jose Hernandez said.

“Navigating the Florida Straits or the Mona passages, especially in unseaworthy vessels, which most of these are, can be extremely dangerous and usually can result in the loss of lives,” Hernandez said.

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The migrants from Jérémie set out on a warm September morning. Trouble surfaced almost immediately.

The boat’s rudder broke just a few hours into the journey as they sailed through the Windward Passage, a strait between Cuba and Haiti known for its rough currents, forcing them to navigate using only the boat’s two electric motors. Four people who were on the boat recounted the journey to The Washington Post.

With no electronic navigational system or GPS devices, the captain relied on the moon, the clouds and the stars to guide them to Cuba, several passengers recalled. For survival and hope, the migrants depended on each other, sharing food, candy and water. Most were strangers to each other but found fellowship in shared desperation and uncertainty.

“Inside the boat, we lived as brothers,” Pierre said.

About eight hours later, the boat approached a beach in eastern Cuba. Dozens of locals waved and welcomed them, offering food and water. They also gave them nails and tools to fix the boat.

While sharing a cigarette with the strangers on the beach, Pierre mentioned it was his birthday. The locals brought a gallon of hot milk as a gift to mark the occasion.

The next morning, Pierre took a rock from the beach in Cuba and put it in his pocket. He wanted to take a souvenir from a land that was “filled with good people,” he said. The migrants then crowded back onto the boat, hoping they’d reach Florida next.

Two days later, they were adrift and lost in the Caribbean.

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Across the region, Haitians are finding it increasingly difficult to migrate legally by foot or plane, making a trip by sea one of the few ways left to leave.

In the Dominican Republic, which shares a land border with Haiti, authorities have begun conducting raids and arbitrary detentions of people suspected to be in the country illegally. The government has also announced measures to restrict migration, including a policy that bans those who are visibly pregnant from entering the country, unless they have international medical insurance. Last month, officials vowed to deport undocumented Haitian workers if business owners fail to prove they have legal working permits.

Haiti's ambassador in Santo Domingo has condemned the detentions and deportations, saying some have violated basic human rights and long-standing bilateral migration agreements.

In Guyana, a transit point for many on their way to Brazil and other South American countries, the government implemented a new visa requirement for Haitians in June, saying it was needed to crack down on a "well-organized human smuggling ring." Previously, Haitians were able to enter and stay in the country for six months.

Turks and Caicos, an archipelago that lies 137 miles from Haiti's northern coast, has also become a popular steppingstone for those looking to reach the United States. In April, authorities intercepted 308 Haitians in two boats off West Harbor Bluff, prompting the government to warn they would deport all those intercepted at sea and ban them from applying for work permits.

The increasingly restrictive immigration controls have left migrants with fewer formal channels for migration, analysts say.

"This has pushed people to come up with other alternatives, paying smugglers, getting on dangerous boat trips and putting people at greater risk and vulnerability," said Bridget Wooding, director of the Center for Migration Observation and Social Development in the Caribbean, a Santo Domingo-based think tank that studies migration flows in the region.

Many of the sea voyages are organized by smugglers and criminal networks that exploit vulnerable people and seize on misinformation and fake news, said migrant advocates and government officials in the region.

"Many of these people don't have money to eat tomorrow, but out of desperation, they will invest \$250 to go on a boat that a few days later will get intercepted," said Loprete of the International Organization for Migration. "But even if they are often returned the next day, people will still go because they have nothing else to hope for."

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As water kept leaking into the boat, the captain told the group they had to make a choice that could determine whether they lived or died: either they continued going straight, aimless and unsure if they would find land, or turn around to Cuba and look for help.

Pierre saw a look of devastation on the faces of those around him.

Despite his own fears, he and another passenger urged the captain to continue to go straight. The rest of the passengers, however, wanted to go back to Cuba.

The captain turned the boat around.

A few hours later, the frightened passengers noticed beaming lights from afar. From the look of the land, some thought they had reached Florida and sighed with relief. But as they slowly approached the military port, a big sign appeared that read "Bahamas."

Members of the Royal Bahamas Defense Force pointed guns at the stunned group and took them all into custody, several onboard the boat recounted. Some broke down in tears.

Pierre spent almost a week in a detention center in the Bahamas along with hundreds of other Haitians, where he and three others said they were beaten by migration officers and deprived of food and water for days before being flown back to Haiti.

Clint Watson, a spokesperson for the prime minister's office, told The Post in a statement that the Bahamian government was "unaware of any reports of Haitian migrants being mistreated while in custody."

The small nation has grappled with a recent influx of up to five boats a week — an "unusually high number" not seen since pre-pandemic times, Watson said in an interview. At one point in September, there were more than 1,000 Haitians held in Inagua — the southernmost district of the Bahamas, he said, which prompted tensions and concerns among residents who say the island is not prepared to handle such large numbers of migrants.

"These boats come laden down with people, they don't use modern navigational devices or electric motors," Watson said. "We want to reiterate to the people coming that the voyage is dangerous and it is not worth it, waters are very deep and it can become very rough if weather is not good."

In June, authorities spotted an overturned boat several miles off Grand Bahama. When they arrived at the site, they found nine Haitians clinging to the boat. Among them was a baby. They also found a man and a woman dead under the capsized boat in what officials suspect was a smuggling operation to reach the United States, according to local news reports.

After ramped-up interceptions and repatriation efforts, the number of Haitians intercepted at sea has greatly subsided in recent weeks, Watson added.

Haitians are also being found near Puerto Rico after setting sail from the Dominican Republic, where some are paying boat captains thousands of dollars for a seat aboard a yola, a small vessel typically used for human smuggling.

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Back in Haiti, life for Pierre, Jeune and the other migrants who set sail only to be caught and deported back has only gotten harder.

"I am back to zero now," said Jeune, who lost his boat and nets during the trip and is now back in Jérémie, working on other fishermen's boats as a helper.

But the experience has not dissuaded him from trying again. He is planning to join another kanntè leaving in December. His 16-year-old son plans to go with him so they can both work in the United States, he said, adding that most of those who left with him want to keep trying to reach Florida.

Those who do reach the United States have little chance of qualifying for asylum, despite the growing violence and instability. Scores are being expeditiously deported under Title 42, a public health law that has been used to return thousands of migrants since the start of the pandemic.

Although the Biden administration extended temporary protected status for Haitians until 2023, the protection only applies to those who are already living in the United States.

Pierre, who said he spent all the money he had on the failed trip, is now working as a carpenter and an electrician, struggling to take care of his family.

	<p>"I have no country because there is nothing for me here," Pierre said. "If I hear of another trip by boat tonight, I am leaving Haiti."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 Aurora \$15M settlement Elijah McClain family</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/20/us/elijah-mcclain-settlement.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/20/us/elijah-mcclain-settlement.html</a>
GIST	<p>Officials in Aurora, Colo., finalized an agreement on Friday to pay \$15 million to the family of Elijah McClain to settle a federal civil rights lawsuit over the police confrontation in 2019 that ended his life, according to city officials and the family's lawyer. Mr. McClain, a 23-year-old Black man, died after the police in that city restrained him with a chokehold maneuver that has since been banned.</p> <p>The agreement, reached in principle in July, is the largest police settlement in the city's history and among the biggest to result from similar cases in the United States, according to Qusair Mohamedbhai, the McClain family's lawyer.</p> <p>Sheneen McClain, Elijah McClain's mother, said in an interview on Saturday that she considers the settlement an important step in seeking justice for her son's death but said that, "There's nothing that can return to me what I lost." She also said that the agreement comes with its own pain. "It's still blood money, because that money has my son's blood on it."</p> <p>There will be an allocation hearing to determine the distribution of the settlement between Ms. McClain and Mr. McClain's biological father, LaWayne Mosley.</p> <p>On Aug. 24, 2019, police received a 911 call in which the caller said that Mr. McClain, who was walking home from a convenience store, "looked sketchy" and was wearing a ski mask and waving his arms.</p> <p>The police arrived and restrained Mr. McClain, pulling him to the ground and subduing him with a "carotid hold," which restricts blood to the brain. Mr. McClain had told the officers he was simply walking home, according to an <a href="#">independent review</a>. "I'm an introvert and I'm different," he said during the confrontation, according to audio recordings from the stop. "I'm just different," he added. "That's all. That's all I was doing. I'm so sorry."</p> <p>While being restrained, Mr. McClain told the officers he couldn't breathe, and he vomited, according to the review. When paramedics arrived about 15 minutes later, they injected him with ketamine, a powerful sedative. Mr. McClain went into cardiac arrest on the way to a hospital and died a few days later.</p> <p>Mr. McClain's parents filed the lawsuit for damages on Aug. 11, 2020, which named the city of Aurora, 12 police officers, two Fire Department paramedics and the department's medical director as defendants.</p> <p>"In a span of 18 minutes, defendants subjected Elijah to a procession of needless and brutal force techniques and unnecessary, recklessly administered medication, the combined effects of which he could not survive," the lawsuit said.</p> <p>Unrelated to the lawsuit, a Colorado grand jury <a href="#">indicted three police officers and two paramedics</a> on charges including manslaughter and criminally negligent homicide. No hearing dates have been set, according to Mr. Mohamedbhai.</p> <p>"This tragedy has greatly changed and shaped Aurora," said Jim Twombly, the Aurora city manager, in a statement Friday. "In the two years since he died, we have taken a hard look at our policies, our biases and our need to listen to our community."</p> <p>In 2020, Gov. Jared Polis signed a sweeping law enforcement reform bill that banned chokeholds and limited the use of deadly force. It also allows plaintiffs to bypass <a href="#">"qualified immunity,"</a> a doctrine that can shield police misconduct from lawsuits seeking damages.</p>

Earlier this year, Governor Polis signed a bill that restricts the ability of emergency medical workers to administer ketamine.

Following [an investigation](#) into policing in Aurora that found a pattern of racial bias and excessive force, the city reached an agreement with the state to make wide-ranging changes in policing policies and practices.

“Elijah, here in Colorado, was a lightning rod for social justice reform,” Mr. Mohamedbhai said.

Mr. McClain was a massage therapist who loved animals and music, having taught himself to play the guitar and the violin.

His family knew him for his drive and determination to improve his life, an energy that they say inspired those around him.

Mr. McClain suffered from asthma as a child, Ms. McClain said. But through his perseverance, he became a strong runner.

“To be able to run down the streets for hours, for miles, that was something both of us, all of us were proud of,” she said. “He was accomplishing all of his obstacles, he was hurdling over those placements in his path, and he was clearing them.”

Since her son’s death, Ms. McClain, who raised Mr. McClain as a single mother, with the two of them sometimes living in their car and sometimes in hotels and shelters, has played an instrumental role in pushing government officials to act on police reform.

“I’ve never seen such drive by a parent to just really try to move our communities forward and to bring meaning to Elijah’s senseless death,” Mr. Mohamedbhai said. “It really goes to show his light and grace and beauty.”

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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 Gunfire prompts panic Atlanta airport</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/20/us/atlanta-airport-gun.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/20/us/atlanta-airport-gun.html</a>
GIST	<p>ATLANTA — Gunfire at the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport on Saturday resulted from an “accidental discharge” of a firearm, officials said, but it caused holiday travelers to flee and seek cover as some believed there was a gunman inside one of the terminals.</p> <p>The airport said on Twitter that <a href="#">there was no gunman or danger to passengers or employees</a>. At about 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, there was an “accidental discharge” at the airport’s security screening area, the airport said.</p> <p>Officials gave an “all-clear” and was resuming normal operations by around 3:30 p.m., <a href="#">the airport said</a>. In the havoc, three people were hurt but their injuries were not life-threatening, the Transportation Security Administration said.</p> <p>The panic occurred during one of the busiest times of the year for air travel, when millions of people are expected to fly for Thanksgiving. The T.S.A. <a href="#">said on Wednesday</a> that airline travel for the Thanksgiving season this year was <a href="#">expected to approach prepandemic levels</a>.</p> <p>The firearm was discharged by a passenger, <a href="#">the administration said</a>. At <a href="#">a news conference on Saturday night</a>, the authorities identified the passenger as 42-year-old Kenny Wells. The police said he was a felon and there were warrants out for his arrest.</p> <p>A T.S.A. officer working at the main checkpoint at the airport began searching a bag when X-ray machines identified a “prohibited item,” the administration said. When the officer opened the bag to</p>

examine it, Mr. Wells lunged into the bag and grabbed a firearm, at which point it discharged, officials said. He then fled, running out an airport exit.

“This was not an active shooter event, however local airport and TSA leadership made the decision to initiate a ground stop while Atlanta Police Department investigated the incident further,” the administration said in a statement.

In 2014, [Georgia passed a law](#) that allowed concealed weapons at airports in areas “outside the screening checkpoint and that are normally open to unscreened passengers or visitors to the airport.”

T.S.A. officers in Georgia have so far this year recovered more than 450 firearms at security checkpoints at the airport in Atlanta.

“This incident underscores the importance of checking personal belongings for dangerous items before leaving for the airport,” the T.S.A. said. “Firearms, particularly loaded firearms, introduce an unnecessary risk at checkpoints, have no place in the passenger cabin of an airplane and represent a very costly mistake for the passengers who attempt to board a flight with them.”

Passengers who bring firearms to airports could face [a civil penalty](#).

The Federal Aviation Administration said all departing flights at the airport were grounded for 35 minutes. Some passengers [shared on social media](#) that they had to exit their departing flights to be rescreened. [Videos](#) also showed that those who had to get off the planes had to stay on the tarmac while they waited for more information.

In the moments of confusion, the airport seemed to [descend into chaos](#). Images posted to social media showed an area of the airport emptied out, [with stray suitcases](#) left behind.

Outside the airport, [people gathered at the departures area](#), [blocking some traffic](#) as passengers waited for answers.

Milaina Latsis, who lives in Flowery Branch, Ga., which is about an hour outside Atlanta, was headed for Minneapolis where she planned to spend Thanksgiving with her mother, her two infants and their father. Before lining up at a security checkpoint, she said they headed to the restroom “and thank God we did.” As they walked out of the restroom and toward security, she said they heard three gunshots.

“It took us a minute to register what was going on, but everyone at T.S.A. was ducking, and we had a clear shot to the exit, so we just ran,” she said. “At this point, it’s just total panic.”

For a moment, her mother stood petrified, holding Ms. Latsis’s 2½-month-old son. The father, Nathan Hancock, who was holding their 15-month-old daughter, shouted, “Let’s go! Run, run, run!”

Christopher Hessen, who had driven to the airport from Auburn, Ala., was waiting for passengers to get off the plane he was supposed to take to Raleigh, N.C., when he noticed the frenzy erupt.

Mr. Hessen dashed for the nearest emergency exit, but the door would not budge, so he bolted for the jet bridge and made his way to the tarmac with dozens of others.

Mr. Hessen, who is a flight instructor at Auburn University, said the airport seemed unprepared for the chaos. No one on the tarmac stopped the fleeing crowd from wandering. No airport official immediately addressed the developing situation.

“That’s what was concerning,” he said. “I figured the airport would get shut down immediately.”

On the tarmac, Mr. Hessen said, “There were aircraft that were going by that were within a wingspan of us — so pretty close — and nothing ever got shut down.”

	After the airport announced an “all-clear,” Mr. Hessen said, the mood on the tarmac lightened, but he and others were still stuck there. “The panic was real at the start, people crying and people hiding, even after we got outside,” he said.
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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Soldiers defect notorious Myanmar army</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/21/world/asia/myanmar-defectors-coup.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/21/world/asia/myanmar-defectors-coup.html</a>
GIST	<p>Aung Myo Htet had always dreamed of being a soldier, and had attained the rank of captain. But when he <a href="#">joined the army in Myanmar</a>, he had thought he would be defending his country, not fighting — and losing — pitched battles against his own countrymen.</p> <p>In June, he was sent to the front lines in Kayah State to subdue <a href="#">resistance fighters and armed protesters</a> opposing the generals who seized power in a February coup. Three of his fellow soldiers were killed, said Aung Myo Htet, 32.</p> <p>“Seeing the casualties on our side made me feel so sad,” he said. “We were fighting and sacrificing ourselves for the general’s sake and not for the country.”</p> <p>On Oct. 7, he walked off his base and joined the <a href="#">country’s Civil Disobedience Movement</a>, a nationwide effort aimed at restoring democracy and bringing down <a href="#">Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing</a>, the man behind the coup. At least 2,000 other soldiers and police officers have done the same, part of a broader campaign to weaken <a href="#">the Tatmadaw</a>, <a href="#">Myanmar’s most notorious institution</a>.</p> <p>The defectors are a small percentage of the Southeast Asian nation’s army, which is estimated to number between 280,000 and 350,000. But they appear to have struck a nerve, and to have contributed to a growing crisis of morale among the troops. The army is struggling to recruit. It has recalled all retirees, threatening to withhold pensions if they do not return. Wives of soldiers say they are being ordered to provide security for the bases, in violation of military law.</p> <p>For the first time in its 67-year history, the Myanmar Defense Services Academy, the country’s equivalent of West Point, was not able to fill the seats for this year’s freshman class.</p> <p>“Never have we seen defections at this level,” said Moe Thuzar, the co-coordinator of the Myanmar Studies Program at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore. “What we’re seeing since February is this steady trickle of people leaving, and also publicly stating their support for the C.D.M. That’s unprecedented.”</p> <p>General Min Aung Hlaing still has the loyalty of his top officers, and there are too few defectors to <a href="#">topple the Tatmadaw</a>. But those who are leaving are being quickly embraced by the resistance. Four of Myanmar’s armed ethnic organizations, which have battled the Tatmadaw since the country became independent from Britain in 1948, have offered food and refuge and the opportunity to combine forces.</p> <p>“Their seasoned military experience has been invaluable for our armed resistance,” said Naing Htoo Aung, Secretary of Defense for the National Unity Government, a group of deposed leaders that has declared itself Myanmar’s legitimate government and that has been tracking the growing number of defectors. “We all now have a common goal.”</p> <p>Many defectors have publicized their accounts on social media, encouraging other soldiers to follow them. Most of the people who have left are lower ranking, but some have been officers.</p> <p>Several defectors are now working with a group of tech activists in a stealth online campaign to get more troops to break ranks. Using stock images of military men and attractive women as profile photos, the activists have created more than a dozen fake Facebook pages to befriend soldiers.</p>



The accounts are used to send direct messages, imploring them not to hurt innocent people. Another group has used Facebook to urge wives to persuade their husbands to leave the military and stop supporting the junta.

“There’s significance in the propaganda war that’s playing out,” said Richard Horsey, a senior adviser on Myanmar for the International Crisis Group. “I think they make the resistance feel emboldened and confident.”

Soldiers who have left say they have felt compelled to do so after the coup, describing their revulsion at instructions from their superiors to shoot civilians. On Nov. 6, the head of a United Nations body investigating war crimes in Myanmar said the military’s attacks on civilians amount to “[crimes against humanity](#).”

“When I was ordered to shoot, I called the people and told them to run away,” said Htet Myat, a captain who was stationed in Bhamo, a city in northern Myanmar that has been the site of intense fighting between ethnic armed rebels and the army. “The people were saved, but I could not live in such an inhumane place.”

Yet defecting can be as dangerous as any battlefield. People’s Soldiers, a group set up by a former captain who was once a speechwriter for Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, has tried to help.

One night in August, Kaung Htet Aung, a 29-year-old sergeant, watched a fellow soldier, on a Zoom session hosted by People’s Soldiers, debate a major who had defected in March and was speaking from a hidden location. As he lay in his barracks and secretly watched the video, Kaung Htet Aung thought about how much the major had to sacrifice to join the anti-coup movement.

He later contacted People’s Soldiers, which told him they would help him defect, marking the start of a harrowing journey. He left his base on May 9 and got into a motorcycle accident. When he sought help, he was thrown into a military prison, he said. On Sept. 6, he escaped the prison, and made his way on foot into the jungle.

The sergeant, who used to make ammunitions, then took a bus to a “liberated area,” a term that the resistance uses to refer to the ethnic borderlands in Myanmar. “I was very happy to be free,” he said. “Now I don’t have to make bullets to kill people.”

While The New York Times could not independently verify the soldier’s account, the risks of defecting are clear. It carries a jail sentence of three years, and family members are often face retaliation. The journey can be perilous, involving hide-outs in multiple cities before reaching safety in the borderlands.

Defecting also means sacrificing a potentially lucrative future. Officers who are able to rise up through the ranks typically benefit from the Tatmadaw’s vast business holdings, which include the country’s two most powerful conglomerates.

“Most people in the military are brainwashed and can’t see the truth,” said Lin Htet Aung, a captain who defected in March. “Some who see the truth do not want to give up their position.”

One argument that defectors use to persuade others to leave centers on the poor treatment of ordinary soldiers. Zwe Man, a corporal, said he wanted to join the military after seeing people put garlands on troops marching in the southern city of Bago in 2016.

A year later, he graduated from the military academy and became a sniper. He said he earned just \$105 a month and that the food was bad. “I joined the army because I wanted to be a soldier who protects the country and is loved by the people,” he said. “But when I joined, I found out that it was a place to torture lower-ranking soldiers.”

	<p>In May, Mr. Zwe Man stumbled across the People's Soldiers Facebook page and started reading the comments:</p> <p>"The military is murdering its own people."</p> <p>"The military is the big thief."</p> <p>"The military is trying to rule the country for their own sake."</p> <p>In July, during the height of a Covid-19 outbreak, Mr. Zwe Man said the army did not isolate people who were infected with the virus, resulting in deaths in the barracks. He has also been haunted by violence he has witnessed since the coup: people being arrested and homes being burned down.</p> <p>He said his girlfriend told him that the army was killing civilians and encouraged him to join the Civil Disobedience Movement. "I decided that what I really needed to do was to stand up for what was right," he said. "And not be on the wrong side of the people." On Sept. 17, Mr. Zwe Man asked his army supervisor for permission to leave the base.</p> <p>His request was approved, he said. And he never returned.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 Vaccines muted welcome in South Sudan</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/20/world/covid-boosters-vaccines-cases-mandates?type=style-live-updates&amp;label=coronavirus%20updates&amp;index=0#covid-vaccines-get-a-muted-welcome-in-south-sudan-a-land-thats-awash-in-bigger-problems">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/20/world/covid-boosters-vaccines-cases-mandates?type=style-live-updates&amp;label=coronavirus%20updates&amp;index=0#covid-vaccines-get-a-muted-welcome-in-south-sudan-a-land-thats-awash-in-bigger-problems</a>
GIST	<p>The vaccination campaign team from UNICEF arrived in a small motorboat last month in the flooded village of Wernyol, not far from the capital of South Sudan, and met with elders under a tree on a small patch of dry land.</p> <p>The team was ready with a briefing sheet about coronavirus and the vaccine, hoping to pre-empt what they assumed would be a flurry of questions, but first and foremost, what the elders wanted to know was: When will the rains stop? In recent years, it has sometimes felt as if rain is the only thing some South Sudanese have ever known. The result is the worst flooding in parts of South Sudan in six decades, affecting about a third of the country.</p> <p>For most of the 11 million people in this landlocked nation in east central Africa, one of the poorest countries on Earth, <a href="#">the coronavirus pandemic is not at the top of the list of problems</a>.</p> <p>Many people have fled Wernyol and other villages in the state of Jonglei, while those who remain have lost their crops, their livestock and their homes. With fish almost the only food available, malnutrition is rampant, as is disease.</p> <p>In Pawel, another submerged village a few hours down a river that only a few years ago was a road, the village leader, James Kuir Bior, 50, was a little skeptical with the U.N. representatives about how the coronavirus vaccine stacked up against all the village's other needs.</p> <p>"We need medicines and nets," Mr. Bior said as a thin covering of clouds overhead hinted at still more rain. "Now all we can think about is how to get out of this flooding."</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 Protests against Italy health pass fizzle</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/20/world/covid-boosters-vaccines-cases-mandates?type=style-live-updates&amp;label=coronavirus%20updates&amp;index=0#italy-covid-protests">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/20/world/covid-boosters-vaccines-cases-mandates?type=style-live-updates&amp;label=coronavirus%20updates&amp;index=0#italy-covid-protests</a>

GIST	<p>Demonstrators gathered in Milan and Rome on Saturday evening to protest Italy’s coronavirus health pass on the 18th consecutive weekend of such rallies. Organizers considered a strong showing necessary to prove that they were a force to be reckoned with.</p> <p>But the paltry turnout in Rome — a few thousand vaccine skeptics decrying “dictatorship” at a protest at the Circus Maximus — and the inability of demonstrators in Milan to dominate, or even reach, squares where they lacked a permit, again showed that the opponents of the health pass are a small minority, and not a powerful movement.</p> <p>Nevertheless, police officers were out in force to protect shops and prevent violence. Store owners have lamented that the protests disrupt business, especially as Christmas shopping is ramping up.</p> <p>After an initial large rally in Rome in October that was <a href="#">hijacked by violent neofascists</a> and a burst of activity in Trieste, a northeastern port city, the demonstrations have diminished. Italy suffered through one of the world’s worst outbreaks early in the pandemic, and by now, most of the Italian public has embraced vaccination. And while the country is experiencing part of the Europe-wide surge in cases, the bump in its caseload has been relatively small.</p> <p>Roberto Burioni, a leading virologist at San Raffaele University in Milan, attributed Italy’s success in keeping down its Covid numbers partly to its aggressive vaccination campaign — more than 73 percent of the population is fully inoculated — and partly to its early intervention with the health pass.</p> <p>Requiring that certificate, known as a Green Pass, has allowed Italy to avoid more draconian measures, he said, such as the <a href="#">nationwide lockdown being imposed in Austria</a> starting next week.</p> <p>Mr. Burioni also said the strict measures in the Green Pass, which is required for entry into bars and clubs, had perhaps motivated Italy’s younger people to get vaccinated.</p> <p>“What is surprising is the rate of vaccination for people between 19 and 29,” he said, putting the rate at nearly 84 percent. “It is very high.”</p> <p>As Italian officials continued to urge people to get inoculated against the virus, the government on Friday reported success in delivering third vaccine doses to people, with 160,000 doses administered in 24 hours. But roughly 6.7 million Italians over age 12 remain unvaccinated, in a country of just over 60 million people.</p> <p>When the Green Pass was introduced last month, it was the toughest such measure in Europe, requiring the entire Italian work force to be vaccinated, have recovered from the virus or have frequent negative tests to earn a paycheck.</p> <p>The government has said that it has no plans to toughen up the pass. But some top ministers and many politicians in the country’s northern regions, which share border with Austria and other countries in which cases are soaring, are urging that the swab option be taken away, essentially mandating vaccinations.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/20 Austrians protest lockdown, mandate
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/20/world/covid-boosters-vaccines-cases-mandates?type=style-live-updates&amp;label=coronavirus%20updates&amp;index=0#austria-covid-lockdown-vaccine-mandate">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/20/world/covid-boosters-vaccines-cases-mandates?type=style-live-updates&amp;label=coronavirus%20updates&amp;index=0#austria-covid-lockdown-vaccine-mandate</a>
GIST	<p>VIENNA — Chanting “freedom” and “resistance,” thousands of Austrians marched through the heart of Vienna on Saturday, united in their anger at their government’s decision to impose a new lockdown and a sweeping <a href="#">nationwide vaccine mandate</a> in an effort to squelch a fresh resurgence of the coronavirus.</p> <p>The police in Vienna estimated that <a href="#">up to 40,000 people took part</a> in the march, families and far-right groups alike. The protests were largely peaceful throughout the afternoon, but as dusk fell over the Austrian capital, skirmishes broke out between officers and groups of demonstrators.</p>

	<p>The size of the turnout surprised officials and reflected the depth of opposition to the government's efforts to crack down on those who continue to resist vaccination, nearly two years after the pandemic first reached Europe.</p> <p>But with new infections <a href="#">multiplying among the unvaccinated in Europe</a>, the president of Slovakia, Austria's neighbor to the east, on Saturday became the latest to raise the prospect of mandating vaccines for all adults.</p> <p>In Vienna, members of far-right groups and others threw beer cans at officers and set off pyrotechnics at points along the route, police officials said. At least five people were arrested, they said, and several others were written up for violations involving failure to wear masks, or for displaying stars like those the Nazis forced Jews to wear during the Holocaust.</p> <p>At other points along the route, demonstrators banged on drums and rang cowbells to express their frustration at measures aimed at halting the rampant surge of the coronavirus, including a nationwide lockdown starting on Monday. Many of the protesters complained that their leaders had failed to do enough before imposing the drastic measures.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 Moves to shift course of pandemic</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/20/world/covid-boosters-vaccines-cases-mandates?type=style-live-updates&amp;label=coronavirus%20updates&amp;index=0#several-moves-by-the-us-in-a-single-week-aim-to-shift-the-course-of-the-pandemic">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/20/world/covid-boosters-vaccines-cases-mandates?type=style-live-updates&amp;label=coronavirus%20updates&amp;index=0#several-moves-by-the-us-in-a-single-week-aim-to-shift-the-course-of-the-pandemic</a>
GIST	<p>The White House, the Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention made several announcements this week that signaled an expansive effort by the federal government to control the pandemic at a time when Americans are desperate for normalcy and caseloads are creeping up with winter's approach.</p> <p>Dr. Bertha Hidalgo, an associate professor of epidemiology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, said that "in order to make it through this winter," people would have to be diligent about getting boosters and understand that "some risk remains" as <a href="#">the pandemic drags on</a>.</p> <p>Here is a rundown of those developments.</p> <p><b>Boosters for all adults.</b>  The C.D.C. on Friday <a href="#">endorsed booster shots of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna coronavirus vaccines for all adults</a>, a move that brought tens of millions fully vaccinated adults a step closer to a third shot.</p> <p>Boosters are recommended six months after the second shot of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines. With this final step, boosters should be available this weekend, allowing many Americans to get a shot before the Thanksgiving holiday.</p> <p>The new recommendations say everyone aged 50 and older — most of whom have other risk factors — as well as those 18 and older living in long-term care facilities "should" get a booster. Other Americans who are 18 and older "may" opt for one if they wish, based on individual risk and benefit.</p> <p>Several advisers said at the meeting that they hoped the simpler age-based guidelines would ease some of the confusion about who was eligible for the extra shots.</p> <p>An advisory committee to the C.D.C. unanimously voted in favor of the booster shots. Dr. Rochelle P. Walensky, the agency's director, later formally accepted the recommendation.</p>

Desperate to dampen even a dim echo of last winter's horrors, the administration is betting that booster shots will shore up what some have characterized as waning immunity against infection among the fully vaccinated.

The F.D.A. [authorized boosters of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines for all adults](#) on Friday, but the C.D.C. generally makes the recommendations followed by the medical profession.

#### **Pfizer seeks to have its Covid antiviral pill authorized.**

Pfizer asked the F.D.A. to [authorize its antiviral pill](#) to treat unvaccinated people with Covid who are at high risk of becoming severely ill, the company said on Tuesday.

The drug, which will be sold under the brand name Paxlovid and is geared toward older people and those who have obesity or medical conditions, could become available within weeks if authorization is granted.

It is meant to be dispensed by pharmacies, taken at home and reach far more patients than other Covid drugs that are typically given by infusion.

The Biden administration is [planning to pay more than \\$5 billion](#) for a stockpile of the pills, enough for about 10 million courses of treatment, after the company gears up production next year.

Senior federal health officials described the pill as a powerful new weapon against Covid. When given promptly to trial groups of high-risk unvaccinated people who developed symptoms of the disease, the drug sharply reduced the risk of hospitalization and death.

#### **The U.S. plans to expand Covid vaccine manufacturing.**

The White House, under pressure to increase the supply of coronavirus vaccines to poor nations, plans to invest billions of dollars to expand U.S. manufacturing capacity, with the goal of producing at least one billion doses a year beginning in the second half of 2022.

President Biden has pledged to fight the coronavirus pandemic by making the United States the “arsenal of [vaccines](#)” for the world. But national self-interest is also at work; as long as vaccination rates remain low in other parts of the world, allowing the virus to spread, dangerous new variants could arise and plunge the United States into crisis once again.

Loyce Pace, the director of global affairs at the Department of Health and Human Services, said that more than half of the world's five million coronavirus deaths had occurred in low- and middle-income countries, and that vaccination rates in some of them were “in the single digits.”

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HEADLINE	<b>11/19 Cities working to reduce emissions</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2021/nov/19/us-cities-working-reduce-emissions">https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2021/nov/19/us-cities-working-reduce-emissions</a>
GIST	<p>After the <a href="#">Cop26</a> conference ended in Glasgow, many activists and climate scientists felt the agreement didn't go far enough and that the US government was among those who had not backed strong words with enough actual deeds.</p> <p>But action on a smaller level in the US – in cities and states – is gaining traction and beginning to make a significant difference. Smaller-scale initiatives to cut emissions have been the significant way that America has made climate progress in the last few years, in the absence of stronger federal leadership.</p> <p>Researchers at the Brookings Institution calculated that in 2018, these climate action plans generated 6% emissions savings for the country – the equivalent of removing 79m cars from the road that year.</p> <p>“These are significant benefits,” says Mark Muro, a senior fellow and policy director at Brookings Metro. “None of this is large enough, but they add up to a meaningful trend of emissions reductions. Those are real contributions.”</p>

Even at the climate meeting there was an increased appreciation of city-based climate action plans – Cop26 featured a whole day focused on what regions and cities can do, Muro points out. In the US, 45 of the 100 biggest metro areas have pledged to cut carbon emissions. “There is no doubt that cities are crucial places where emissions can be curtailed and better solutions worked out.”

Cities are on the frontlines of action plans, but also of the direct effects of the climate crisis, including power outages, fires and floods. That makes them more likely to take quick action. People moving due to climate change will also primarily be moving to cities, putting extra importance on their ability to plan for the future. Joe Biden’s new infrastructure bill will pour tens of billions of dollars into funding for climate-related projects.

For example, San Diego recently [created a plan](#) to become more climate resilient – one that prioritizes the needs of the most climate-vulnerable. It would plant more trees, expand parks in low-income areas and update public transit.

“As our country has witnessed in recent months, extreme weather driven by a changing climate can have devastating effects,” Todd Gloria, San Diego’s mayor, wrote in the plan. “While these threats aren’t new to San Diego, science tells us that climate change is making these events more frequent and intense. The cost of inaction would be far greater than investing in our future.”

In Austin, Texas, the city successfully decreased its building emissions by 20% despite a booming population, but experienced an increase in transportation emissions between 2010 and 2018. The city hopes to [electrify their municipal vehicle fleet](#) in the near future.

Pittsburgh finalized a plan this week to increase energy efficiency across the city and reduce emissions by [50% by 2030](#), pushed forward by the Glasgow conference, which the mayor attended.

Ambitious climate action plans are crucial roadmaps, but they can be based on faulty assumptions. Muro’s research shows such plans have been a mixed bag in terms of actually delivering emissions reductions. “They make large promises that aren’t necessarily backed up by hard work of delivery,” he says. “It’s a good time to refocus and really think about how to make these work better.”

For one thing, more cities need plans: in 2018, Muro and his colleagues tallied that only 45 of the largest 100 cities in the US had such plans. Smaller metros often don’t have any plans in place. Some regions of the redder states may struggle to implement climate strategies – though Muro says that when they package climate strategies as part of a data-driven good government effort, it is less fraught with politics.

Also, the quality of the pledges is questionable – they can sometimes be infeasible if they don’t have control over a power plant that produces emissions in their region, or if they aren’t able to enforce rules that they propose due to other laws. Also, with the exception of cities in California, city action plans’ efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are mostly non-binding.

Cities and states can learn from each other, rather than reinventing the wheel each time. Groups like C40 cities – a global network of mayors taking action on the climate crisis – can make it easier to share data and strategies. Pooling data can also lower the cost of accountability.

Coming out of Cop26, there is a recognition of the extreme urgency of the moment and the importance of cities as one source of progress, Muro says. “Cities need to couple their large aspirations with grittier implementation now.”

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HEADLINE	11/19 US faces nurses’ shortage from burnout
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/19/us-faces-nurse-shortage-burnout-covid">https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/19/us-faces-nurse-shortage-burnout-covid</a>



Mary Ann Evelyn already knew she wanted to be a nurse at age 15, so she started volunteering at a children's hospital in St Louis.

Fifty years later, Evelyn's feelings about nursing haven't changed in spite of her work during the past 20 months in a hospice unit in Naples, Florida.

In one instance near the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, three young men stood outside their grandfather's room, not allowed to enter because of the virus. Evelyn wheeled the grandfather's bed close to the window so they could at least see his face as he died.

"That was the hardest thing for me," said Evelyn, crying as she recounted the story.

While Evelyn managed to move past that sorrow, her 28-year-old daughter Veronica, an intensive care unit nurse in Nashville, Tennessee, called her a year ago, after seeing three millennials die from Covid and said, "I can't do nursing anymore."

That sense of burnout has become more common among nurses in the US during the pandemic because of anxiety, depression and exhaustion due to the increased workload; fears of catching the virus; and the witnessing of so many deaths, among other reasons, according to several studies.

Now healthcare organizations across the country are trying to keep a shortage of nurses from getting worse and searching for answers on how to provide relief to nurses who are ready to quit.

"Everybody has gone through some amount of stress and emotional distress with the pandemic, and nursing is no different," said Betty Jo Rocchio, chief nursing officer for Mercy, a St Louis-based Roman Catholic healthcare organization. "It seems like our nurses have had that double impact, personally and professionally, and we say it's created professional burnout, but it's kind of just life burnout."

In a recent survey from the American Nurses Foundation, 21% of nurses said they planned to leave their job within the next six months, and half of those who wanted to leave said it was because work was negatively affecting their health and wellbeing.

"They have given their all for a year and a half or two years," Annette Kennedy, president of the International Council of Nurses, said at a recent press conference. "They have worked long hours. They have worked without breaks and they have been called to do a duty without protective equipment and without support."

Before the pandemic, Mercy had about 9,000 nurses, which was about 1,000 fewer than the health system needed, Rocchio said. That gap was further exposed as Covid patients started to fill up the hospitals' emergency rooms and intensive care units.

During the pandemic, the system has lost an additional 500 nurses to burnout, retirement or better paying travel nursing positions, Rocchio said.

The College of Nursing at the University of Missouri–St Louis (UMSL) also saw a 20% decrease in its enrollment this year, according to Roxanne Vandermause, dean of the program.

She doesn't know the exact reason for the decrease but speculates that it could be because people have found school to be less of a priority during the pandemic or because of how healthcare – with its masking and vaccination requirements – has become an arena for conflict.

"There is a point where I think average citizens say, 'I don't want to hear about these conflicts anymore. I don't want to be part of these situations that are so completely uncontrollable,'" Vandermause said.

The UMSL enrollment is not necessarily representative of national trends. Enrollment in bachelor's nursing programs across the country increased 5.6% in 2020 from the year before, to just over 250,000 students, according to a survey from the American Association of Colleges of Nursing.

But whatever the reason for the UMSL decrease, Rocchio is concerned because the local nursing schools are Mercy's pipeline for staff.

To increase the pool of nurses, Mercy is trying to find adults already established in other careers and encourage them to become nurses by offering scholarships and flexible clinical hours for training at its hospitals, Rocchio said.

"We are trying to position ourselves to help anybody interested in nursing school get through nursing school," she said.

Hospitals across the country have also significantly increased salaries for nurses as they compete with one another and travel nursing companies for staff. The Wall Street Journal reported that the average annual salary for nurses, not including bonus pay, increased about 4% in the first nine months of the year to \$81,376.

Mercy is preparing to release an improved benefits and compensation package in order to remain competitive in the local market, though they can't compete with travel nursing companies, Rocchio said.

"We are looking at what are the things that our workforce needs in order to remain healthy, happy and stay working at Mercy, and it's not just money but competitive childcare...as well as things around retirement, wellness" and flexible scheduling, Rocchio said.

Evely, the Florida nurse, has not received a pay increase during the pandemic, but her employer did provide nurses an additional week of vacation time, she said. Still, if her husband had become sick with Covid, and Evely had to stay home from work, that would have counted against her vacation time.

"I don't think nurses take care of themselves, and of course I think they are underpaid and underappreciated – especially nowadays." But she said before Covid "I felt like that too," Evely said.

In spite of that feeling and other heartache – she lost a 48-year-old fellow nurse to Covid – Evely remains committed to working in hospice.

"So many people say, 'How do you do this?' And I don't know what the correct response is, but I always say, 'It's part of life, and I am so glad that I was able to be able to help your loved one in the final journey,'" Evely said.

Her daughter Veronica has also continued to work as a nurse. After the phone call, she had three days off.

Evely encouraged her to "regroup and realize you're helping people," she said. "After that, she was fine."

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HEADLINE	11/20 Kashmir tension high India police shootout
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/20/kashmir-deaths-human-shields-india-police">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/20/kashmir-deaths-human-shields-india-police</a>
GIST	<p>Tensions in the Indian state of Kashmir remain on a knife edge after a shootout by the Indian authorities this week left four people dead, with families alleging the gunfight was staged and that police used innocent civilians as a "human shield".</p> <p>Police initially described the incident, which took place on Monday when officers raided a shopping complex, as a counter-insurgency operation in which two militants and their associates had been killed in a shootout.</p>

The families of three of the men, however, have accused Indian forces of cold-blooded murder and the case has sent ripples of outrage across Kashmir, a region scarred by familiar allegations of extrajudicial killings. India's top regional official has called an inquiry into the deaths and the region imposed a shutdown strike in protest on Friday.

An armed insurgency with allegiance to Pakistan has been ongoing since the 1990s in Indian-administered Kashmir, a region claimed in its entirety by both countries. The Indian authorities have heavily militarised the state in response and aggressively pursued those it casts as Pakistan militants.

Thousands of people, including civilians, have been killed in the violence. Human rights groups have accused Indian forces, which operate with legal impunity, of abuses including rape, torture and staging gunfights.

Citizens and rights activists have also decried an increasing denial of civil liberties in Kashmir since the region was stripped of its semi-autonomous status in August 2019, taken under the full control of the central government and divided into federally controlled territories of India.

The controversy this week began hours after Monday's operation, when the niece of one of the men killed, Mohammad Altaf Bhat, challenged the allegations. She said a tweet that her businessman uncle had not been associated with any militancy and instead had been used as a "human shield" in a staged gunfight.

Families of two of the other men killed subsequently made similar allegations. They rejected police claims that their kin had any connection with insurgents and alleged that police had killed civilians and passed them off as militants.

The other two men killed were identified as Mudasir Gul, a dentist who was working as an estate agent, and his office assistant, Aamir Magray. Police said the fourth person killed in the raids was a Pakistani militant using the alias Haider.

To the further anguish of the families, police clandestinely buried all four killed in the raid under the cover of darkness, in a forest more than 50 miles north of the capital, Srinagar, where the killings took place.

As outrage grew over the course of the week, police made varying statements. They initially said Bhat and Gul were militant associates but later that they may have been civilians killed in indeterminate crossfire. Police maintain Magray was a militant, but his family say he was a local labourer.

According to witnesses present during the raid, police had received a "tip-off" about a militant in the shopping complex. They had allegedly seized Gul, Bhat and Magray, who all worked in the vicinity, and made them search the building. Gunshots were later heard from the spot. Police said militants fired on them, resulting in a gun battle, but they families allege the officers murdered three innocent civilians.

The families held a sit-in protest in Srinagar's press enclave on Thursday to demand the bodies of their kin. They were later forcibly removed, but the bodies of Bhat and Gul were exhumed the next day and handed over.

Family members of Bhat and Gul told the Guardian there were torture marks on the bodies of the two men, and that it appeared they had been beaten first and then shot.

Rubbishing the police claims that he was associated with militancy, Gul's wife, Humaira Mudasir, said "forces killed him to fetch cash rewards". Officers in Kashmir are often rewarded for killing militants with cash incentives or promotions.

"He was doing well in his business, taking care of his parents, and living with his family. How is it possible that such a person is a militant?" Mudasir said while cradling their one-year-old daughter.

	<p>A funeral for Bhat was finally held on Thursday night. His body was carried on the shoulders of angry and emotional mourners chanting “shuahada kai waris zinda hai” or “the heirs of martyrs are alive” as dozens of masked and armed police stood nearby.</p> <p>“The police had put conditions that we bury him without any delay with a limited gathering of people present,” said Bhat’s niece, Saima Bhat. “The police also threatened dire consequences if any protests take place or if journalists attend it.”</p> <p>The family of Magray, 32, continue to demand the return of his body. “They killed an innocent person and also stole his body,” said his cousin Nadeem.</p> <p>Indian forces have repeatedly been blamed for killing civilians and passing them off as militants. In an incident in December 2020, the bodies of men killed by Indian forces were exhumed and buried in family graveyards after an investigation found they had been Kashmiri labourers with no militant affiliation.</p> <p>Authorities have begun an investigation into the incident, but mistrust is rife and the families of the dead men are not hopeful of justice being served. “We want an independent investigation,” said Saima Bhat. “We will fight until the culprits are punished.”</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>11/19 Riots erupt amid Rotterdam Covid protest</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/19/riots-erupt-at-covid-19-protest-in-rotterdam/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/19/riots-erupt-at-covid-19-protest-in-rotterdam/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>THE HAGUE, Netherlands — Police fired warning shots, injuring an unknown number of people, as riots broke out Friday night in downtown Rotterdam at a demonstration against plans by the government to restrict access for unvaccinated people to some venues.</p> <p>Police said in a tweet that “there are injuries in connection with the shots” during the violent unrest. Riot police used a water cannon in an attempt to drive hundreds of rioters from a central street in the port city.</p> <p>Video from social media shown on Dutch broadcaster NOS appeared to show a person being shot in Rotterdam, but there was no immediate word on what happened.</p> <p>Police said in a tweet that it was “still unclear how and by whom” the person was apparently shot.</p> <p>Late Friday night, police said downtown Rotterdam remained restive and there was still a heavy police presence on the streets.</p> <p>Police said they arrested dozens of rioters and expected to detain more. They said about seven people were injured, including police officers. They did not give further details.</p> <p>Photos in Dutch media showed at least one police car ablaze and another with a bicycle smashed through the windshield.</p> <p>Local political party Leefbaar Rotterdam condemned the violence in a tweet.</p> <p>“The center of our beautiful city has this evening transformed into a war zone,” it said. “Rotterdam is a city where you can disagree with things that happen but violence is never, never, the solution.”</p> <p>Police said in a tweet that rioters started fires and threw fireworks during the rioting and authorities closed the city’s main railway station.</p> <p>Local media say gangs of soccer hooligans were involved in the rioting.</p>

	<p>The government has said it wants to introduce a law that would allow businesses to restrict the country's coronavirus pass system to only people who are fully vaccinated or have recovered from COVID-19 - that would exclude people who test negative.</p> <p>The country has seen record numbers of infections in recent days and a new partial lockdown came into force a week ago.</p> <p>In January, rioting broke out in Rotterdam and other Dutch cities after the government announced a curfew in an attempt to rein in soaring coronavirus infections.</p> <p>Earlier Friday, the government banned fireworks on Dec. 31 for the second straight year. The ban is intended "to prevent, as much as possible, extra strain on health care, law enforcement and first responders," the government said Friday.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/19 US: China in dramatic military buildup</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/19/white-house-official-china-engaged-dramatic-milita/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/19/white-house-official-china-engaged-dramatic-milita/</a>
GIST	<p>China's "dramatic" military buildup has triggered unease across Asia and was the driving factor behind the recent formation of a three-way U.S., Britain and Australia security pact focused on the region, said President Biden's top national security advisor for the Indo-Pacific.</p> <p>Kurt M. Campbell, deputy assistant to the president and National Security Council coordinator for the Indo-Pacific, also said the administration is well-aware the so-called "AUKUS" pact and other U.S. moves — such as building up the pro-democracy "Quad" alignment with Japan, Australia and India — are causing "heartburn" for Beijing.</p> <p>Mr. Campbell offered the comments at the U.S. Institute of Peace forum on Friday, days after Mr. Biden and Mr. Xi held a three-hour virtual summit to discuss a slate of issues amid growing international concern that a Cold War is brewing between America and China, the world's biggest communist power.</p> <p>Mr. Campbell said the Biden administration seeks to engage in competition with China in every realm globally but wants to avoid Cold War-style posturing and escalation. However, Chinese leaders have accused the U.S. of fomenting new Cold War dynamics by bolstering ties with like-minded allies, including with nations that might otherwise be within Beijing's sphere of influence.</p> <p>"I think it would be fair to say at the virtual meeting, President Xi made very clear that a number of things that the United States is doing cause China some heartburn," Mr. Campbell said. "And I think at the top of that list is our bilateral, reinforcing and revitalizing our bilateral security alliances with Japan, with South Korea, with Australia, the Philippines and Thailand — new partnerships like Vietnam, the Quad, working constructively with India, AUKUS, and frankly, talking to the Europeans in a more dynamic way about areas of cooperation on technology and the like."</p> <p>"I think President Xi made clear that those, from the Chinese perspective, represent what they would describe as Cold War thinking," he said. "We believe they are essential features, interconnected, overlapping, multipurpose, some formalized, some informal, that together help pursue this operating system that has led to such profound prosperity over the last 30 years. I think the critical thing for us going forward is to be open and transparent about the work."</p> <p>Mr. Campbell suggested the push for transparency contrasts with what has been a largely non-transparent military buildup by Beijing over the past quarter century.</p> <p>"Since beginning in about 1996," he said, "what we have witnessed is one of the largest military buildups across every sector — shipbuilding, nuclear [and] a number of technologies that are concerning on the part of China in modern times, this massive military investment and new capabilities."</p>

“We’re of the view that some of this is destabilizing, much of it has been done in a non-transparent manner and I think, behind the scenes, many in Asia are worried about this substantial, dramatic set of military investments,” he said. “Indeed, some of those steps have led other countries to respond and I would say AUKUS is one of those responses.”

U.S. military officials have expressed specific concern over China’s expanding nuclear weapons arsenal. A recent Pentagon report warned that China is on a path to more than double its arsenal over the coming years and could have 700 deliverable nuclear warheads by 2027, and 1,000 by 2030.

While China’s military muscle-flexing around Taiwan, as well as other weaponry advancements — including a test of a nuclear-capable hypersonic missile — have made global headlines in recent months, a White House summary of the summit that occurred Monday between Mr. Biden and Mr. Xi made no mention of a specific discussion on such matters.

The summary did, however, say that Mr. Biden “underscored the importance of managing strategic risks” with China and “noted the need for common-sense guardrails” to ensure that U.S.-China “competition does not veer into conflict.”

Concerns are particularly high that a conflict could begin by accident, given the accelerating rate at which Beijing’s military capabilities are expanding.

A top U.S. Air Force general told The Washington Times early this month that China’s military advancements continue to surpass U.S. estimates. Neither the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War nor any other country in recent history has so consistently exceeded Pentagon and intelligence community projections.

Lt. Gen. S. Clinton Hinote, the Air Force’s deputy chief of staff for strategy, integration and requirements, offered a blunt assessment of how quickly the Chinese armed forces have accelerated key programs such as hypersonic weapons, nuclear arms and a host of others.

“One of the most interesting things about being a China-watcher over maybe the last 10, 15 years has been it’s the only country certainly in my memory ... that consistently accelerates faster than we estimate,” Gen. Hinote told The Times. “The Soviets didn’t do that. Certainly not North Korea or Iran, anything like that. But China has done a good job of taking their economic power...and applying that to [the] acceleration of military capability.”

That assessment dovetailed with Mr. Campbell’s remarks on Friday.

“The military capabilities that stretch from nuclear to cyber to space raise a host of concerns,” Mr. Campbell said, adding that Mr. Biden sought during Monday’s summit to open a dialogue with Mr. Xi about the need for transparency and open channels of communication to avoid an unintentional clash.

“What the president sought to do was to say, ‘As great powers, we have an interest in doing what we can to head off problems, inadvertence, miscalculation and accident, that’s at the first level,’” Mr. Campbell said.

“What we would like to do, and we have tried in the past, is to enlist China in discussions about what we would do if we faced some sort of accident or inadvertence,” he said. “We’re at the very earliest stages of that kind of discussion.”

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HEADLINE	11/19 US warns military action South China Sea
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/19/us-threatens-military-response-china-south-china-s/">https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/19/us-threatens-military-response-china-south-china-s/</a>
GIST	The State Department on Friday warned China that it risks military action from the United States in response to Chinese coast guard efforts to block the resupply of a Philippines island outpost.



The department said in a statement that the Chinese coast guard operation Tuesday blocking Philippine resupply ships and using water cannons at Second Thomas Shoal in the Spratly Islands of the South China Sea could trigger the U.S.-Philippines mutual defense treaty.

“The United States stands with our Philippine allies in upholding the rules-based international maritime order and reaffirms that an armed attack on Philippine public vessels in the South China Sea would invoke U.S. mutual defense commitments under Article IV of the 1951 U.S. Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty,” the statement said. “The United States strongly believes that [China’s] actions asserting its expansive and unlawful South China Sea maritime claims undermine peace and security in the region.”

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke to Philippines Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana by phone on Friday to discuss the standoff, saying the U.S. would “stand with our Philippine allies.”

“Secretary Austin reaffirmed the strong U.S. commitment to the Philippines under the Mutual Defense Treaty,” Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said in a statement. “They agreed on the vital importance of peace and stability in the South China Sea and pledged to stay in close contact in the coming days.”

China has been militarily encroaching on the entire South China Sea since 2012. At that time, Chinese maritime vessels took control of the disputed Scarborough Shoal in the Spratlys, but the Obama administration took no action to support the Philippines, despite the mutual defense pact.

In 2019, then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo reversed the approach by announcing that any Chinese military action against Philippines’ interests in the Spratly would invoke the defense treaty.

The shoal at issue is the location of a grounded Philippines ship that has been used as an island base for several years. The ship is dependent on supplies from the Philippines navy and China for the first time has tried to block the shipments in an escalation of its disputed maritime claims in the region.

China has asserted ownership of some 90% of the South China Sea under vague historical claims — claims rejected by an international tribunal several years ago as an unlawful encroachment on an international waterway.

“The United States stands with our ally, the Philippines, in the face of this escalation that directly threatens regional peace and stability, escalates regional tensions, infringes upon freedom of navigation in the South China Sea as guaranteed under international law, and undermines the rules-based international order,” the State Department said.

The statement noted that an arbitration panel created under the 1983 Law of the Sea Convention issued a “unanimous and enduring decision” that rejected Beijing’s claims to Second Thomas Shoal and concluded that waters around the shoal were part of Manila’s exclusive economic zone.

“The PRC and the Philippines, pursuant to their treaty obligations under the Law of the Sea Convention, are legally bound to comply with this decision,” the statement said.

“The PRC should not interfere with lawful Philippine activities in the Philippines’ exclusive economic zone,” the statement said, using the acronym for People’s Republic of China.

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HEADLINE	11/19 Astroworld highlighted music festivals risk
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/arts-entertainment/2021/11/19/astroworld-music-festivals-dark-side/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/arts-entertainment/2021/11/19/astroworld-music-festivals-dark-side/</a>
GIST	Noah Diaz woke up at 6 a.m., exhilarated to attend his first music festival and finally see Travis Scott perform live.

He and his buddies arrived at the Astroworld Festival grounds at 8 a.m. on Nov. 5, only to find a rowdy crowd already pulling down barricades and rushing past the covid checkpoint. A girl's foot was stuck between metal bars of a barricade as people "were running over her." Someone began igniting small fireworks. A police officer discharged his Taser into the sky.

Diaz felt the first pangs of anxiety. It was 10 a.m.

"It felt doomed from the start," said the 22-year-old Houston resident.

By the time Scott took the stage that night, Diaz felt claustrophobic. Crowd surges, often egged on by Scott himself, lifted Diaz, a 6-foot-2, 280-pound former high school football player, off his feet. He struggled to breathe and watched people slip under the crowd, pinned to the ground.

"It was almost like you were in a wave pool ... [but] drowning in human bodies," he said.

After the show, Diaz ripped up a painting of a previous Astroworld festival that a friend had painted years ago. He threw his dirty shoes in the trash and deleted all of Scott's music from his phone. "I don't want to experience a trigger that makes me relive those events," he said. (Scott has said he was "devastated" and working with authorities investigating what went wrong.)

So far, [10 people have died](#) as a result of those crowd crushes. Diaz can't believe the number is so low. "After all that, I'm done with festivals," he said. "I don't want to leave anything up to chance, to say, 'Hopefully they care about me.'"

By their nature, music festivals run the risk of turning into miserable experiences, if not outright dangerous ones. The original 1969 Woodstock, which has come to symbolize the idyllic all-fests aspire to, [was rife with issues](#): band performed hours late, an anarchist group tore down fencing and two people died, one run over by a tractor. Thirty years later, the 1999 version devolved into riots that led to three deaths, 44 arrests and widespread reports of sexual assault.

Nonetheless, fans flock to them. Roughly [32 million people](#), more than the population of Texas, attend music festivals each year.

"For many young people, it's a formative event," said Gina Arnold, author of "[Half a Million Strong: Crowds and Power From Woodstock to Coachella](#)." And others "go to music festivals to participate in history. They want to be part of something that they can historically say, 'I was a part of. I went to Woodstock. I was at Astroworld.'"

They've become the United States' premiere live music experience, fueled by the creation of California's Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in 1999, Tennessee's Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival in 2002 and the revival of Chicago's Lollapalooza in 2003.

And most festivals run smoothly enough. The ones that don't often share similar problems: Insufficient security. Poor crowd control. Lack of planning. A shortage of water.

"There's always been tension between promoters, organizers or artists wanting to maximize profits and an audience that just wants to have a good time," said Steven Hyden, who chronicled the 20th anniversary of Woodstock '99 in his podcast "[Break Stuff: The Story of Woodstock '99](#)."

One issue, Arnold said, is that unlike in Europe, where music festivals have been part of the cultural landscape for decades, the U.S. has been in a 20-year mad dash to build the infrastructure to support hundreds of new fests, much of which is done in a "slipshod" way.

The [Fyre Festival in 2017](#), which proved to be such a disaster it inspired competing documentaries on Netflix and Hulu, highlighted this principle to an absurd degree. Fans arrived to Fyre, which was billed as "two transformative weekends" on a "remote and private" island in the Bahamas, only to find boxed

cheese sandwiches, what appeared to be “FEMA tents” and headliner bands pulling out at the last minute — along with barely any festival staff (or, frankly, any festival). It was [later described](#) as “nothing more than a get-rich-quick scam.”

Adding to the issues is that festivals can be antithetical to enjoying live music if the endgame is to assemble as many bodies as possible into a confined space — on a budget.

This year’s Virginia-based, independently run Blue Ridge Rock Festival, which hosted the likes of Rob Zombie and Limp Bizkit in September, inspired more than 8,000 attendees to form the Facebook group [Screwed by Blue Ridge Rock Festival](#). Complaints ranged from a shortage of parking spaces to a lack of [accessibility](#) for those with disabilities. Meanwhile, TomorrowWorld, an American spinoff of the wildly popular Belgian electronic dance music festival TomorrowLand, lasted only three years. Attendees of the 2015 festival in Chattahoochee Hills, Ga., [reported](#) water and food shortages and that organizers weren’t prepared for inclement weather.

If festivals have such a penchant for unpleasantness — not to mention danger — then why go in the first place?

Benjamin Cramer, a 27-year-old Baltimore resident, has attended fests across the world for a decade and has no plans of stopping — though he knows how bad things can get. He loves “the freedom of mobility I have when I’m in a big festival where I can move around to different stages, explore different music.”

His personal weekend from hell took place in September 2021 at the Elements Festival in Lakewood, Pa. Cramer and his friends waited hours in the parking lot for buses to take them the three or so miles to the festival grounds, which included a 150-acre field with a lake for attendees to cool off in.

But once they arrived, water was difficult to find, and food vendors quickly ran dry — Cramer and his friends subsisted on peanut butter and jelly for three days. The lake was closed. Porta Potties overflowed with human waste. Staff was scant, at best. More troubling, Cramer says, security and advertised covid precautions were scarce.

But the horrible conditions brought people together. Jared Barnhart, a 25-year-old Ithaca, N.Y., resident and a Type 1 diabetic, attended Elements specifically because of the promised covid protocols — everyone was to be vaccinated or tested — only to be dismayed that they weren’t followed. He’ll never attend it again, describing it the way one might a war.

“People bonded over the trauma of standing in a field for up to sixteen hours,” Barnhart said. “We knew without saying what we’d all gone through and what was still in store for the weekend.”

After he complained, Cramer says, festival organizers offered him a 33 percent discount on their next event, which he turned down. When he finally left, he said, “All we could do is laugh and say, ‘Never again.’”

Not Elements, at least.

“I’m very concerned for this industry,” he said. “If concerts become a public health concern, we’re going to lose access to one of the most wonderful things about our country: that we have such a diverse and wide availability of different types of music in different places.”

Even when festivals take the proper precautions, however, things can get out of hand. Hyden, the cultural critic, pointed to Roskilde Festival in Denmark in 2000, where nine people were trampled to death during a Pearl Jam performance.

The festival had reduced attendance to prevent overcrowding. Metal poles were erected around the ground to prevent crowd surges.

“They were trying to do a good festival, and they still had one of the worst tragedies ever,” Hyden said. In all these instances, he contemplates the “unanswerable question” of what is the “X-factor of what drives people to act in a way that potentially hurts other people in the audience? That’s, I think, harder to contemplate, that darker question.”

Things aren’t always great for the artists, either. Damon Krukowski, who toured the major festival circuit a few decades ago as part of the influential indie rock band Galaxie 500, said some of the massive European festivals they played — such as Glastonbury in England and Roskilde — “were among my least favorite gigs we ever had. ... They were nightmares to me, personally.”

“You’re in a bubble on that stage,” Krukowski says. “You actually don’t hear or even see the audience. You’re in a weird, cut-off world.”

The 58-year-old rocker has become a vocal critic of the festival circuit and says artists should demand higher standards, including better pay.

“I have never had a friend in a band who said to me, ‘these are my dream gigs,’” said Krukowski. But without these shows, it can be difficult for artists, beyond megastars like Travis Scott, to make a middle-class living. “Festivals suck money out of a larger system [of clubs and independent venues] and concentrate it.”

Whatever their problems, festivals aren’t going anywhere. And neither are their fans.

Cooper Irwin found himself trapped in the same Astroworld crowd as Noah Diaz. Unlike Diaz, Irwin is a veteran of music festivals, drawn to “the community and the crowd.” During his time at the University of Texas, the now 26-year-old Austin resident regularly attended South by Southwest and Austin City Limits. He’s since branched out to Governor’s Ball in New York City and Electric Daisy Carnival in Las Vegas.

“When it’s special, it’s special. You end up meeting really cool people,” he said. “And I love the ability to see five or 10 of your favorite artists in one weekend.”

From the moment Irwin and his girlfriend arrived at Astroworld, though, something felt off. He only noticed two water stations for the approximately 50,000 attendees. It took them 45 minutes to fill their bottles. He also found it odd that Scott had his own stage. At most music festivals, multiple acts play at the same time — on various stages throughout the day — to assist with crowd control.

As Scott’s performance started, panic set in and Irwin and his girlfriend tried to push their way out of the crowd to no avail. Eventually, they stumbled upon a pile of bodies on the ground, which included one unresponsive girl. They tried to give her CPR, but there were too many people packed in to do it properly.

Looking back, Irwin knows they were lucky. Between them, he and his girlfriend lost two shoes and a phone. While attempting find the missing phone, the pair ended up finding six. Two belonged to people he later learned had died at the festival.

The experience has left him shaken, but he doesn’t plan to give up music fests. They’re too special.

“I have a little bit of PTSD and a little bit of anxiety thinking of going into a big crowd again, but I’m going to work through that,” Irwin said. “I still love the overarching idea of festivals.”

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HEADLINE	11/19 US: Russia eyes military incursion Ukraine
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/19/us/politics/russia-ukraine-biden-administration.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/19/us/politics/russia-ukraine-biden-administration.html</a>
GIST	WASHINGTON — American intelligence officials are warning allies that there is a short window of time to prevent Russia from taking military action in Ukraine, pushing European countries to work with the

United States to develop a package of economic and military measures to deter Moscow, according to American and European officials.

Russia has not yet decided what it intends to do with the troops it has amassed near Ukraine, American officials said, but the buildup is being taken seriously and the United States is not assuming it is a bluff.

Avril D. Haines, the director of national intelligence, traveled to Brussels this week to brief NATO ambassadors about American intelligence on the situation and a possible Russian military intervention in Ukraine. Ms. Haines's trip was long planned and covered a variety of issues, but the growing concerns over Russia were among the short-term threats discussed, according to officials briefed on them.

The United States has also been sharing intelligence with Ukraine. And on Friday, Gen. Mark A. Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, spoke with Lt. Gen. Valery Zaluzhny, the commander in chief of Ukraine's military, to discuss Russia's "concerning activity in the area," the Joint Staff said in a statement.

American and British intelligence are increasingly convinced that President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia is considering military action to take control of a larger swath of Ukraine, or to destabilize the country enough to usher in a more pro-Moscow government.

American and allied officials sounded an alarm in April, as Moscow [built up forces near its border with Ukraine](#). But the current buildup, which appears to involve more troops and sophisticated weaponry, has engendered more concerns — particularly as Russia has moved to jam Ukrainian surveillance drones. Hostilities have also spiked since Ukraine [used one of its drones to attack a separatist howitzer](#), prompting Russia to scramble jets.

"It's not inevitable that there's going to be an increase of kinetic conflict, but all the pieces are in place," said Frederick B. Hodges, the former top U.S. Army commander in Europe now with the Center for European Policy Analysis. "If we, the West, look like we are not cohesive and ready to work together, then the risk of the Kremlin making a terrible miscalculation goes up."

American intelligence officials have told allies that Mr. Putin has grown frustrated with the peace process set up by France and Germany in 2014 after Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula and engineered a separatist rebellion in eastern Ukraine.

Some former officials say Mr. Putin could be intent on securing a land route between eastern Ukraine and Crimea. And American analysts believe Mr. Putin sees the next few months as a unique moment to act.

With Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany leaving the world stage, there is less pressure on Ukraine to make concessions. Without a coalition in Germany, there is little leadership in Berlin.

Rising energy prices have made Europe more dependent on cheap Russian gas supplies, especially as winter deepens and gas reserves in Europe drop further. Fear of losing access to Russian energy could limit Europe's support of tough sanctions.

Russia has already begun manipulating energy supplies in Europe, a Western official based in Brussels said. When energy prices rise, the official said, Mr. Putin feels he has more latitude to act.

And with rising prices and limited supplies, Russia has more money to pay for military operations, according to current and former officials.

American officials want to create a "common prescription" of actions the United States and Europe would take, should Russia move against Ukraine militarily. While there are parts of Russia's economy that have not been subjected to sanctions, the United States will need to build support in Europe for new measures to be effective.

On Thursday, as Ms. Haines was leaving Brussels, the Senate confirmed Julianne Smith to become the next U.S. ambassador to NATO. Her nomination had been held up for months by Senator Ted Cruz, Republican of Texas, complicating American efforts to form a united response to the growing threat to Ukraine.

At NATO, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has offered his own warnings about Russia. Speaking in Berlin on Friday, Mr. Stoltenberg described the “large and unusual” concentration of Russian forces on Ukraine’s border. “It is urgent that Russia shows transparency about its military build up, de-escalate and reduce tensions,” he said.

Russia sent troops to a site in Crimea called Cape Opuk and moved a larger number to a former warehouse complex near the Russian town of Pavlovsk. The deployments put Russian tanks, howitzers and Iskander short-range ballistic missiles within striking distance of Ukraine’s border, according to a recent report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Earlier in the week, Lloyd J. Austin III, the secretary of defense, also said the Russian troop buildup was a matter of concern. “We’re not sure exactly what Mr. Putin is up to, but these movements certainly have our attention,” he said.

The growing worry about Russian intentions comes after William J. Burns, the C.I.A. director, traveled to Moscow this month at the behest of President Biden to warn against any action against Ukraine.

American officials warned Russia that using its forces to intimidate Ukraine or take more territory was unacceptable and would prompt a strong reaction from the West.

While some cautioned that it was too soon to judge Moscow’s reactions, others briefed on the meeting believed Russia was not taking seriously the threat of a tough response.

Intelligence officials are still wrestling with the possible connections between the migrant [crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border](#) and Russia’s military buildup on the border with Ukraine.

Intelligence officials have not found direct involvement of Russia in the Belarusian border crisis, and some believe [President Aleksandr G. Lukashenko of Belarus](#) engineered it with little or no input from Russia.

On Friday, [the Polish government announced](#) that Ms. Haines had met in Warsaw with Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and other officials to discuss security on NATO’s “eastern flank.” The meetings, the government said, were conducted at the request of the United States.

Mr. Putin has a long history of using drama in neighboring countries to advance his own interests. NATO countries, said the Western official, need to be mindful that the Belarusian crisis and troop buildup on Ukraine’s border are occurring at the same time.

“Putin is very fleet of foot,” said Jim Townsend, a former senior Pentagon official. “I think he likes diversionary things. This plays into his hands. All eyes are on the Belarus border. Meanwhile, he is putting together what he feels might need to go into Ukraine.”

Any response to Russia’s deployments should be carefully calibrated to avoid escalating the situation and further endangering Ukraine, American and European officials said.

“We have to be ready to be tough,” Mr. Townsend said. “We don’t have to go bomb something. But we have to be clever in how we show our military capability.”

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HEADLINE	11/19 Other legal fallout from Kenosha violence
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/19/us/kenosha-lawsuit-victim.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/19/us/kenosha-lawsuit-victim.html</a>



Kyle Rittenhouse's homicide trial has shined a searchlight on the violence and destruction that enveloped Kenosha, Wis., for several days in August 2020. But the not-guilty verdicts in the trial will not be the final word on those events.

Civil lawsuits are pending in federal court that accuse the authorities of wrongdoing, both during the turbulence in the city and in the police shooting that instigated it. Here is a look at some of the unresolved cases.

### **Lawsuit by Jacob Blake**

The episode that first prompted the angry demonstrations in Kenosha was the shooting of Jacob Blake by a Kenosha police officer, Rusten Sheskey, on Aug. 23, 2020. Mr. Blake was hit by seven shots — including several that struck him in the back — in an encounter that was captured on video. Acts of arson and vandalism during and after the demonstrations are what drew some armed civilians, including Mr. Rittenhouse, to downtown Kenosha. They have said they intended to guard businesses.

Michael Graveley, the Kenosha County district attorney, announced in January that [neither Officer Sheskey nor Mr. Blake](#), who had a knife when officers were struggling to arrest him on a warrant for a sexual assault charge, would be charged in connection with the encounter.

Mr. Blake [sued Officer Sheskey in federal court in March](#), saying that the officer violated his civil rights by using excessive force. Officer Sheskey's lawyers have denied the allegations in court.

### **Lawsuit by Anthony Huber's family**

The most serious charge in Mr. Rittenhouse's trial, first-degree intentional homicide, concerns Anthony Huber, the second man Mr. Rittenhouse fatally shot on Aug. 25, 2020.

Mr. Huber's parents filed suit in federal court in August 2021 against the Kenosha Police Department, the Kenosha County Sheriff's Department and others, including Sheriff David Beth and the current and former city police chiefs.

The suit accuses the defendants, among other things, of allowing civilians like Mr. Rittenhouse to "patrol the streets, armed with deadly weapons, to mete out justice as they saw fit," and of actively enabling and conspiring with them.

The suit portrays Mr. Huber as a "hero" who tried to disarm Mr. Rittenhouse by hitting him with a skateboard after Mr. Rittenhouse had shot and killed Joseph Rosenbaum.

The defendants have filed motions asking the court to dismiss the case. A lawyer for the county defendants, Samuel Hall, called the allegations "demonstrably false." A lawyer for city officials declined to comment.

### **Lawsuit by Gaige Grosskreutz**

Mr. Grosskreutz was the third man shot by Mr. Rittenhouse. He was badly wounded but survived, and he [testified in Mr. Rittenhouse's trial](#).

His suit in federal court levels accusations similar to those in the Huber family's lawsuit against several of the same defendants. The suit states that Mr. Grosskreutz, who was approaching Mr. Rittenhouse with a handgun when he was shot, lost 90 percent of his right biceps as a result.

As of earlier this month, none of the authorities named as defendants had yet responded in court to Mr. Grosskreutz's lawsuit. Mr. Hall, the lawyer for county officials, noted that Mr. Grosskreutz had not sued Mr. Rittenhouse.

Mr. Grosskreutz's lawyer, Kimberley Motley, also represents the estate of Mr. Rosenbaum, the first man Mr. Rittenhouse shot. No litigation has been filed so far on behalf of Mr. Rosenbaum's survivors.



HEADLINE	11/20 US: no abandonment of Arab allies
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/20/us/politics/us-middle-east.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/20/us/politics/us-middle-east.html</a>
GIST	<p>MANAMA, Bahrain — The Biden administration is trying to convince its Arab allies that the United States, despite appearances to the contrary, is not fed up with the region and headed for the doors.</p> <p>It is a tough sell. At a meeting on Saturday in Bahrain that comes on the eve of global talks meant to rein in Iran's nuclear ambitions, Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III faced tough questions about how Arab allies were supposed to deal with the whiplash of an American national security policy that upends itself every four to eight years with a new president.</p> <p>With President Biden now <a href="#">trying to undo</a> President Donald J. Trump's <a href="#">own undoing</a> of President Barack Obama's <a href="#">Iran nuclear deal</a>, some Arab allies expressed frustration that they were caught in the middle and must go their own way. The United Arab Emirates, for instance, is taking steps to de-escalate its own tensions with Tehran, after years of striking a harsher tone.</p> <p>The tumultuous American <a href="#">withdrawal from Afghanistan</a> in August after 20 years, the <a href="#">announced withdrawal</a> of American combat troops from Iraq by the end of this year, and the Biden administration's recent hyping of <a href="#">China as its biggest and most serious national security priority</a> have combined to leave officials in the Middle East, site of so much American national security angst over the past 20 years, feeling left out.</p> <p>"Now that you're on the clock to withdraw your combat troops from Iraq, and with the withdrawal of Afghanistan, there are a lot of worries here," Farhad Alaaldin, the chairman of the Iraq Advisory Council, a research institute in Baghdad, told Mr. Austin during a question-and-answer session on Saturday at the International Institute for Strategic Studies conference in Manama, Bahrain's capital. "Your partners on the scene are worried, and some of them are starting to run for cover."</p> <p>The defense secretary made efforts to reassure his counterparts in Bahrain that the United States would remain engaged in the Middle East. Referring to "a lot of angst that I hear," Mr. Austin insisted that "we're not going to abandon these interests going forward."</p> <p>As part of the diplomatic outreach this weekend, Brett McGurk, the White House Middle East coordinator, and Robert Malley, Mr. Biden's Iran envoy, joined the defense secretary in Manama.</p> <p>Mr. Austin said that the Biden administration would seek to counter Iran, even as the United States tries to resuscitate the 2015 nuclear deal that Mr. Trump abandoned. The latest round of talks to revive that deal are <a href="#">set to begin on Nov. 29</a> in Vienna, and officials have been privately pessimistic that a breakthrough would come any time soon.</p> <p>"We remain committed to a diplomatic outcome of the nuclear issue," Mr. Austin said. "But if Iran isn't willing to engage seriously, then we will look at all the options necessary to keep the United States secure."</p> <p>Those options are limited. If Mr. Trump, for all of his often-stated antipathy toward Tehran, balked at striking Iranian nuclear facilities out of fear of prompting another prolonged American engagement in the region, Mr. Biden is even less likely to take such an action, aides acknowledge, no matter how many "options" Mr. Austin mentions. In fact, the United States has been so wary of ruining the looming nuclear talks that the administration has so far refrained from hitting back at Iran for an armed drone attack last month on an American military base in southern Syria.</p> <p>American officials say that they believe the drone attack, which caused no casualties, was Iranian retaliation for Israeli airstrikes in Syria.</p> <p>Five <a href="#">so-called suicide drones were launched</a> at the American base at Al Tanf on Oct. 20 in what the U.S. Central Command called a "deliberate and coordinated" attack. Only two detonated on impact, but they</p>

were loaded with ball bearings and shrapnel with a “clear intent to kill,” a senior U.S. military official said.

Most of the 200 American troops stationed at the base, whose main role is training Syrian militias to fight the Islamic State, had been evacuated hours earlier after being tipped off by Israeli intelligence, officials said.

U.S. officials said they believed that Iran directed and supplied the proxy forces that carried out the attack. Iran has not claimed responsibility for the attack, though Iranian news media applauded it.

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HEADLINE	11/20 Hard costs of high gas prices
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/20/business/high-cost-of-gas.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/20/business/high-cost-of-gas.html</a>
GIST	<p>A driver in Belleville, N.J., cut his cable and downsized his apartment to save money for gas. A retiree in Vallejo, Calif., said he had stopped driving to go fishing because the miles cost too much in fuel. An auto repairman in Toms River, N.J., doesn't go to restaurants as often. And an Uber Eats deliveryman said he couldn't afford frequent visits to his family and friends, some of whom live 60 miles away.</p> <p>“Times are tough right now,” Chris Gonzalez, 31, the Uber Eats driver, said as he filled up his tank at a Safeway gas station off Interstate 80 in California.</p> <p>Millions of American drivers have acutely felt the recent surge in gas prices, which last month hit their highest level since 2014. The national <a href="#">average</a> for a gallon of gas is \$3.41, which is \$1.29 more than it was a year ago, according to AAA. Even after a recent price dip in crude oil, gasoline remains 7 cents more per gallon than it was a month ago.</p> <p>While consumers are seeing a steady rise in the prices of many goods and services, the cost of gas is especially visible. It is displayed along highways across the country, including in areas where a gallon has climbed as high as \$7.59.</p> <p>Steeper gas prices are pushing people to rejigger household budgets, sometimes by forgoing leisure activities and in other cases by cutting back spending on essentials. Many are trying to save by spending less time on the road, a difficult proposition as the holiday season approaches, and with it the temptation to make up for the lost celebrations of last year. Just 32 percent of Americans plan to drive for Thanksgiving, down from 35 percent last year, at the height of the pandemic, and 65 percent in 2019, according to a <a href="#">survey</a> from the fuel savings platform GasBuddy.</p> <p>Consumers glimpsed the prospect of some relief this month as oil prices fell, responding to a strengthening U.S. dollar along with concerns about impending Covid-19 lockdowns in Europe, and gas prices began to stabilize. Though there is normally a delay between a drop in oil prices and cheaper gas, President Biden <a href="#">instructed the Federal Trade Commission</a> this week to investigate why prices at the pump haven't declined as much as might be expected, citing the possibility of “illegal conduct” by oil and gas companies. The administration is also facing calls from Congress to tap the country's <a href="#">Strategic Petroleum Reserve</a>, which the Senate majority leader, Chuck Schumer, said would help struggling Americans.</p> <p>Gas prices have gone up in part because of fluctuations in supply and demand. Demand for oil fell precipitously in the early months of the pandemic, so the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other oil-producing nations cut production. In the United States, reduced demand led to a substantial decline in drilling; the country's oil rig count was down nearly 70 percent in summer 2020. But over the past year, demand for oil recovered far faster than OPEC restored its production, and crude oil prices doubled to as much as \$84 a barrel. (Since Nov. 9, the price has declined to just over \$76.)</p> <p>The shutdown of some large American refineries during the pandemic also tightened the oil supply. Since the beginning of 2020, some 5 percent of the country's refining capacity has closed, responding to a decline in travel.</p>

“When you have demand recovering but you’ve eliminated permanently some source of the supply, then prices go up,” said Andy Lipow, president of Lipow Oil Associates, a consulting firm in Houston. “The consumer is feeling pain at the pump.”

For drivers, the rising costs have added stress to commutes and weekly routines; suddenly, popping out for errands or dropping children at school has taken on new financial weight. Like breakdowns in the supply chain to labor shortages, gas prices have also contributed to a growing sense among consumers that the economy is not fully functioning for them.

Aldo McCoy, who owns an auto repair shop in Toms River, watched the numbers on a gas pump flash higher Wednesday as he filled up the tank of his 1963 Chevrolet Impala. He recalled recently filling his 2003 Cadillac Escalade and seeing the price go above \$100, where it used to be \$45.

Mr. McCoy said he and his staff were working more than 15 hours of overtime each week to compensate for the extra money they spent on gas. He has also cut back on his household spending.

“You don’t go out to stores much, or out to dinner,” he said. “You can’t travel to enjoy yourself. It’s off the table now.”

Louise Tomitz, 74, who is retired and lives on Social Security in Toms River, said the price of gas was making it difficult to cover the costs of visits to her daughter nearly an hour away in Middletown, N.J.

“I don’t work now, and then you have to pay all this extra money for gas and it’s affecting my budget,” Ms. Tomitz said. “It’s getting rough.”

Drivers shocked at gas prices are seeing more than just the effects of crude oil costs. Compliance with renewable-fuel standards can add more than 10 cents per gallon, the price of ethanol has increased, and labor shortages in the trucking industry have made it more expensive to get gas from terminals to stations.

Energy analysts point out that gas prices have been higher in the past; in 2008, the national average rose above \$4.10 per gallon. (Adjusted for inflation, that would be equivalent to \$5.16 today.) They’re optimistic that the increase in travel and gas demand is a reflection of the economy’s rebound from the pandemic, though they worry that rising prices could make people cut back on other spending.

“If gas prices rise so much that it affects consumers’ disposable incomes, this would weigh on discretionary spending,” said Fawad Razaqzada, a market analyst at ThinkMarkets. “It would be bad news for retailers.”

In California, where the average price of a gallon is the highest in the nation, at more than \$4.60, drivers said they were changing their behavior. Some sought out cheaper spots, like Costco and Safeway gas stations, to save a few dollars.

At an Arco station in San Francisco’s NoPa neighborhood, a line of cars extended into the crowded street on Thursday. Some drivers searched for change. Others grumbled about the prices, which have shot up to as much as \$4.49 at the Arco — known locally for its normally cheap rates — and up to \$5.85 in the most expensive part of the city.

Keith Crawford, 57, who was filling up his Kia Optima, said he had taken to getting smaller amounts of gas twice a week to soften the blow to his bank account.

“You have to spread it out in order to stay afloat,” said Mr. Crawford, a concierge. “It’s part of the budget now.”

Thirty miles northeast of San Francisco in Vallejo, drivers lined up at the Safeway gas station off I-80, where the price was \$4.83 per gallon. Several put the blame for their bills on the Biden administration.

“It’s Biden, Gavin Newsom — look at the gas taxes we pay,” said Kevin Altman, a 54-year-old retiree, referring to California’s governor.

Mr. Altman paid \$50 to fill up his Jeep and estimated the gas would last him just two days. He said he had stopped driving to go fishing in nearby Benicia to avoid using too much gas, and would do all his Christmas shopping online this year.

The cost can be especially challenging for people who own businesses that depend on transit. Mahmut Sonmez, 33, who runs a car service, spends nearly \$800 on gas out of the \$2,500 he earns each week driving people around New Jersey. To save money, he moved in September into a Belleville apartment that is \$400 cheaper than his previous home. He also cut his cable service and changed cellphone plans.

If gas prices keep rising, Mr. Sonmez said, he will consider changing jobs after nine years in the industry. “Somehow we’ve got to pay the rent,” he said.

In New Jersey, which bans self-service gas, some drivers are directing their ire toward station attendants.

“Every day they’re cursing me out,” said Gaby Marmol, 25, the assistant manager of a BP station in Newark, adding that when she sees how much the customers spend on both gas and convenience store items — \$1.19 for ring pops that used to be 50 cents — she feels sympathetic. “We’re just doing our jobs, but they think we set the prices.”

Cheik Diakite, 62, an attendant at a Mobil station in Newark, doesn’t get as many tips as he did before the pandemic, he said, and grows frustrated listening to customers attribute the high prices to Mr. Biden.

Mr. Diakite typically passes afternoons by looking out for his most loyal customers. Bebi Amzad, who works at a nearby school, always has the same request for him: “Fill it up.” But when she pulled in on Thursday, she asked him to give her just \$30 worth of gas.

“Today I’m not filling up all the way because I have other expenses,” said Ms. Amzad, 54, who commutes to Newark from Linden, N.J. “Everybody is hurting.”

Because she spends so much on gas and groceries, Ms. Amzad continued, she can’t afford many indulgences. “I don’t go to Marshalls anymore.”

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HEADLINE	11/20 When can Covid masks finally come off?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/20/health/coronavirus-masks-mandates.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/20/health/coronavirus-masks-mandates.html</a>
GIST	<p>Amid the turmoil of the last two years — a period that included a deadly pandemic, mass layoffs, an ugly presidential election and an attack on the United States Capitol — some of the fiercest political debates in America have been waged over a nearly weightless piece of fabric: the face mask.</p> <p>American officials were slow to embrace face masks as a strategy for slowing the spread of the coronavirus. When they finally did, masks became a potent symbol of the pandemic — a common-sense <a href="#">public health measure</a> turned <a href="#">political flashpoint</a> and a visible reminder that life was anything but normal.</p> <p>Now, with the summer’s Delta surge in the rearview mirror and the vaccination of school-age children underway, many Americans are wondering when the masks might finally come off.</p> <p>“The best science does support mask-wearing as a valid strategy to reduce Covid-19,” said Dr. Stephen Luby, an infectious disease expert and epidemiologist at Stanford University. “The issue is: Well, how long do we do this, and in how many contexts?” He added, “Do we all wear masks the rest of our lives?”</p>

Some public officials are already mapping out an endgame. On Tuesday, Mayor Muriel Bowser of Washington, D.C., announced that indoor mask requirements [would be loosened](#). The next day, Florida lawmakers [passed a bill banning school mask mandates](#), which some districts had already abandoned.

Eric Adams, New York City's mayor-elect, "wants to drop the mask mandate in schools when health officials determine it's safe," his spokesman said in an email.

That time has not yet come, experts said.

"Cases are starting to rise again, and we have not yet conquered this virus," said Anne Rimoin, an epidemiologist at the University of California, Los Angeles. "We may be tired of Covid and Covid restrictions and public health measures, but this virus is certainly not done with us yet."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that even fully vaccinated people wear masks in public indoor spaces where community transmission of the virus is "[substantial or high](#)." Currently, [roughly 85 percent](#) of U.S. counties meet that threshold, which is defined as at least 50 new cases weekly per 100,000 residents.

It will be safer to ease [mask requirements](#) early next year, scientists said, after more children have been fully vaccinated and the holiday travel season has passed. And voluntary mask-wearing will continue to be helpful in certain circumstances, as well as in future cold and flu seasons, they noted.

"I don't think we're going to want to put all our masks away," Dr. Luby said.

### **Masking up**

Several lines of evidence support the effectiveness of face masks as a public health intervention.

Laboratory studies have shown that even basic cloth masks can block [more than 50 percent](#) of small aerosols; surgical masks and N95 respirators are even better. And real-world research suggests that [statewide](#) and [schoolwide](#) mask mandates curb the spread of the virus.

A randomized trial, conducted by Dr. Luby and his colleagues in 600 villages in Bangladesh, demonstrated that [a mask-wearing intervention](#), including the distribution of free masks and a multipronged messaging campaign, led to substantial increases in mask-wearing and declines in Covid cases. (The study has not yet been published in a scientific journal.)

All of these studies have limitations, but together they, and [many similar analyses](#), add up to a clear conclusion.

"There is an overwhelming amount of evidence that masks help slow transmission," said Linsey Marr, an expert in airborne viruses at Virginia Tech.

Face masks are not without drawbacks. "They impede communication," Dr. Marr said. "They can be uncomfortable."

Some people with disabilities may not be able to wear masks, and there is still debate over how to weigh the benefits and downsides of masking young children, who are much less likely than adults to become seriously ill from the virus. (The C.D.C. says that children under 2 [should not wear masks](#), while the World Health Organization [recommends against requiring](#) masks for children under 6.)

But given that most people tolerate masks well and that mask-wearing is far less disruptive than other mitigation measures like lockdowns, face masks are a key tool in managing the pandemic, experts said.

"I think mask-wearing is, in many ways, one of the interventions that you probably want to relax last," said Richard Stutt, an infectious disease modeler at the University of Cambridge. "Mask-wearing is very, very low cost in comparison to most other interventions."

## **Exit strategy**

But mask mandates were never intended to last forever, and this fall, as cases dropped and vaccine eligibility expanded, some public officials began considering how to end them.

This month, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health [announced its criteria](#), including specific vaccination and transmission benchmarks, for lifting some of its indoor masking requirements.

Gov. Phil Murphy of New Jersey recently said he hoped to lift the state's school mask mandate "[sooner than later](#)" and floated the idea of eliminating the requirement in phases, beginning with high schools, whose teenage students have been eligible for vaccination for months.

But loosening mask requirements now would be premature, experts said, especially as we head into the winter, when people spend more time indoors, holiday travel brings far-flung people together and respiratory viruses circulate easily.

"Now is not the time that I would reduce mask mandates," Dr. Luby said.

Dr. Marr recommended not lifting school mask mandates until after the winter holidays had passed and more school-age children had had the chance to get both of their shots. If community transmission levels are low or moderate a few weeks after school resumes in January, then, "Yeah, let's get rid of the masks," she said.

Seema Lakdawala, a respiratory virus expert at the University of Pittsburgh, imagined a similar timeline: "Maybe in February, we can say goodbye to masks."

Other experts were reluctant to provide a date. Dr. Rimoin said she would like to see a more sustained reduction in cases and deaths before easing mask requirements. "We're still seeing 1,000 people dying a day from this virus," she said. "It's not just a matter of comfort and ease — I mean, this is a matter of life or death for many people."

## **A face mask future**

Easing mask restrictions will need to be a local decision, scientists stressed, based on a complex set of factors including local transmission and vaccination rates, and the vulnerability of the population in question.

"If a region or particular community is having an outbreak, then I think it would make a lot of sense for people within that community to be wearing masks even if, nationally, things are fairly under control," Dr. Stutt said.

And mask-wearing is not all-or-nothing. Even after mandates are lifted, it will make sense for some people — older adults or those who are immunocompromised, for instance — to wear masks in certain circumstances and settings. And people should be prepared to put masks back on in the event of future surges, scientists said.

Experts also expressed hope that new mask-wearing norms might outlast the pandemic. Face masks could help reduce transmission of other respiratory viruses, and experts said that they planned to continue wearing masks in some environments, such as on planes and buses, during future flu seasons.

"Before the pandemic there was a stigma associated with wearing masks in this country, but I think it's become normalized in a lot of places," Dr. Marr said. (Still, she acknowledged, "I think others will never wear a mask again.")

Dr. Lakdawala expressed hope that as other pandemic restrictions eased, people might find a brief period of mask-wearing, in certain high-risk situations, less onerous.



	“Hopefully as people become more comfortable with vaccination and realize that they can see their friends and family and they can go and do their normal activities in a safe way, wearing a mask on a bus for the 20 minutes you need to ride it to work isn’t seen as a burden,” she said. “It’s seen as a way to protect yourself and your family.”
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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 CDC endorses boosters for all adults</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/20/world/covid-boosters-vaccines-cases-mandates#cdc-boosters-adults">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/20/world/covid-boosters-vaccines-cases-mandates#cdc-boosters-adults</a>
GIST	<p>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Friday <a href="#">endorsed booster shots of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna coronavirus vaccines for all adults</a>, a move that brings tens of millions fully vaccinated people a step closer to a third shot.</p> <p>Boosters are recommended six months after the second shot of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines. With this final step, boosters should be available this weekend, allowing many Americans to get a shot before the Thanksgiving holiday.</p> <p>The new recommendations say that everyone 50 and older — most of whom have other risk factors — as well as those 18 and older living in long-term care facilities “should” get a booster. Other Americans who are 18 and older “may” opt for one if they wish, based on individual risk and benefit.</p> <p>Several advisers said at the meeting that they hoped the simpler age-based guidelines would ease some of the confusion around who is eligible for the extra shots.</p> <p>An advisory committee to the C.D.C. unanimously voted in favor of the booster shots. Dr. Rochelle Walensky, the agency’s director, later formally accepted the recommendation. The recommendations align with President Biden’s promise in August that all adults would be eligible for extra doses.</p> <p>Desperate to dampen even a dim echo of last winter’s horrors, the administration is betting that booster shots will shore up what some have characterized as waning immunity among the fully vaccinated.</p> <p>The Food and Drug Administration <a href="#">authorized boosters of the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines for all adults</a> on Friday, but the C.D.C. generally makes the recommendations followed by the medical profession.</p> <p>In recent days, several states <a href="#">have broadened booster access</a> to all adults on their own.</p> <p>Addressing the panelists, <a href="#">Dr. Sam Posner</a>, the acting director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, acknowledged that previous eligibility categories “were complicated to implement” and said he hoped that simplifying them “will reduce confusion.”</p> <p>After a brief respite, coronavirus infections <a href="#">are inching up again</a>, particularly in parts of the country where cooler weather is hustling people indoors. Research suggests that the shots may help forestall at least some infections, particularly in older adults and those with certain health conditions.</p> <p>The C.D.C.’s decision lands just as Americans are preparing to spend the holidays with family and friends. Given the tens of millions of Americans who have yet to receive a single dose of vaccine, holiday travel and get-togethers could send cases skyrocketing, as they did last year.</p> <p>Several European countries are also offering boosters to all adults in a bid to contain fresh waves of infections. France has gone so far as to mandate booster shots for people over age 65 who wish to get a health pass permitting access to public venues.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 Thousands protest restrictions in Australia</b>
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SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/20/world/covid-boosters-vaccines-cases-mandates#covid-protests-australia">https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/20/world/covid-boosters-vaccines-cases-mandates#covid-protests-australia</a>
GIST	<p>Thousands rallied in Melbourne and other Australian cities on Saturday to protest pandemic restrictions and vaccine mandates.</p> <p>In Melbourne, the capital of Victoria State, protesters gathered outside the state Parliament and marched through the central business district. They waved Australian flags, chanting, “No more mandates” and “Kill the bill.”</p> <p>It was the latest demonstration after a week of escalating protests over a <a href="#">contentious pandemic powers bill</a> that the state government is seeking to pass within the next month. The bill would replace a state of emergency that is set to lapse on Dec. 15, allowing officials to continue enforcing restrictions related to <a href="#">lockdowns</a>, masking requirements and vaccination mandates.</p> <p>It would also allow the state government to make new pandemic orders that it determines would help protect public health. The opposition Liberal Party and some legal and rights groups have raised concerns about the bill’s broad scope.</p> <p>Over the past week, protesters have camped outside Victoria’s Capitol as the government negotiated passage of the bill. Lawmakers who support the bill have reported receiving death threats and being <a href="#">targets of abuse</a>.</p> <p>The protests on Saturday also targeted vaccination requirements. Although Australia has no broad vaccine mandate, individual states have introduced mandatory vaccination for some workers, including those in <a href="#">construction</a>, education and health care. In Victoria, unvaccinated people are not allowed to eat in restaurants or to visit shops unless they are buying essential goods like food and medicine.</p> <p>Pro-vaccination campaigners staged a smaller demonstration in Melbourne’s central business district on Saturday. The police kept the two groups apart.</p> <p>Anti-vaccine crowds also gathered in Adelaide, Brisbane and Sydney, the country’s biggest city.</p> <p>Among those gathered in Sydney was Craig Kelly, a federal lawmaker who quit the governing Liberal Party this year after facing criticism from Prime Minister Scott Morrison for spreading anti-vaccination misinformation and promoting unproven coronavirus treatments. On Saturday, he addressed thousands of anti-vaccination protesters at a park in Sydney’s central business district.</p> <p>“When we have governments that adopt vaccine passports, we’re no longer free,” he said. “We don’t live in a free society — we live in a prison camp.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 Race to the future: frantic quest for cobalt</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/20/world/china-congo-cobalt-takeaways.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/20/world/china-congo-cobalt-takeaways.html</a>
GIST	<p>The clean energy revolution is replacing oil and gas with a new global force: the minerals and metals needed in electric car batteries, solar panels and other forms of renewable energy.</p> <p>Places like the Democratic Republic of Congo, which produces two-thirds of the world’s supply of cobalt, for example, are stepping into the kinds of roles once played by Saudi Arabia and other oil-rich nations. And a race between China and the United States to secure supplies could have far-reaching implications for the shared goal of protecting the planet.</p> <p>An investigation by The New York Times drew on interviews with more than 100 people on three continents and thousands of pages of financial, diplomatic and other documents. Here are some of the findings.</p>

**The United States is vulnerable to price shocks and supply shortages as it embraces green energy.**

The American government failed to safeguard decades of diplomatic and financial investments it had made in Congo, even as China was positioning itself to dominate the new electric vehicle era.

The sale, starting in 2016, of two major cobalt reserves in Congo by an American mining giant to a Chinese conglomerate marked the end of any major U.S. mining presence in cobalt in the country.

Chinese battery makers have forged agreements with the mining companies to secure steady supplies of the metal.

**Beijing bankrolled a buying spree of mines in Congo, locking up a key supply chain.**

As of last year, 15 of the 19 cobalt-producing mines in Congo were owned or financed by Chinese companies, according to a data analysis. The companies had received at least \$12 billion in loans and other financing from state-backed institutions, and are likely to have drawn billions more.

The five biggest Chinese mining companies in Congo that focus on cobalt and copper mining also had lines of credit from Chinese state-backed banks totaling \$124 billion.

One of the government-backed companies, China Molybdenum, which bought the two American-owned reserves, described itself to The Times as “a pure business entity” traded on two stock exchanges. Records show 25 percent of the company is owned by a local government in China.

**Congolese officials accuse Chinese mining companies of cheating the country of promised revenues and improvements.**

The Congolese are reviewing past mining contracts with financial help from the American government, part of a broader anti-corruption effort. They are also examining whether Chinese promises to build roads, schools, hospitals and other infrastructure were kept.

Separately, Chinese Molybdenum is being accused of withholding payments to the government at its Tenke Fungurume cobalt and copper mine. The company said it had done nothing wrong, and questioned if there was an organized effort to undermine it.

China has an idiom that goes something like: “Where there is a will to condemn, evidence will follow,” a spokesman said. “Vaguely I feel that we may be caught in the gaming of greater powers.”

**The purchase by the Chinese of an American-owned mine was facilitated by a firm with Hunter Biden on the board.**

Tenke Fungurume, one of the biggest cobalt mines in the world, was controlled by an American company, Freeport-McMoRan. Then it was [sold in 2016](#) in a series of transactions worth \$3.8 billion to China Molybdenum. The sale was aided by a Chinese private equity firm that bought out a minority owner in the mine.

A founding board member of the private equity firm was Hunter Biden, son of the American president. A Washington company that had been controlled by Mr. Biden remains a shareholder in the firm, according to Chinese financial documents. Chris Clark, a lawyer for Mr. Biden, said his client “no longer holds any interest, directly or indirectly,” in the Washington and Chinese firms. Filings in China show he is no longer a board member of the Chinese firm. Mr. Biden did not respond to requests for comment.

When asked if the president had been made aware of his son’s connection to the sale, a White House spokesman said, “No.”

**Chinese ownership has increased the global supply of cobalt, but workers complain of safety lapses.**

Increased mining and refining of cobalt by Chinese companies has helped meet the growing demand worldwide. But at least a dozen employees or contractors at the Tenke Fungurume mine told The Times that Chinese ownership had led to a drastic decline in safety and an increase in injuries, many of which were not reported to management.

The company said that the complaints were probably fabricated, and that it had actually increased safety.

### **The United States is behind in the race for minerals.**

As the world pivots to a future focused on electric vehicles, the United States is playing catch-up, though both Congress and the Biden administration are now making first steps. [Legislation passed the House](#) on Friday that would provide more than a half-trillion dollars toward shifting the U.S. economy away from fossil fuels to renewable energy and electric cars.

Amos Hochstein, the State Department's senior adviser for global energy security, predicts access to solar panels and electric vehicle batteries will determine energy security in the future.

"It's a national security imperative that the United States ensure the 21st century doesn't repeat the vulnerabilities of the 20th century," he said.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/19 Attempted breach Ohio election network</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/attempted-breach-ohio-election/2021/11/19/12417a4c-488c-11ec-b8d9-232f4afe4d9b_story.html">https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/attempted-breach-ohio-election/2021/11/19/12417a4c-488c-11ec-b8d9-232f4afe4d9b_story.html</a>
GIST	<p>Federal and state investigators are examining an attempt to breach an Ohio county's election network that bears striking similarities to an incident in Colorado earlier this year, when government officials helped an outsider gain access to the county voting system in an effort to find fraud.</p> <p>Data obtained in both instances were distributed at an August "cyber symposium" on election fraud hosted by MyPillow executive Mike Lindell, an ally of former president Donald Trump who has spent millions of dollars promoting false claims that the 2020 election was rigged.</p> <p>The attempted breach in Ohio occurred on May 4 inside the county office of John Hamercheck (R), chairman of the Lake County Board of Commissioners, according to two individuals with knowledge of the incident, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the ongoing investigations. State and county officials said no sensitive data were obtained, but they determined that a private laptop was plugged into the county network in Hamercheck's office, and that the routine network traffic captured by the computer was circulated at the same Lindell conference as the data from the Colorado breach.</p> <p>Together, the incidents in Ohio and Colorado point to an escalation in attacks on the nation's voting systems by those who have embraced Trump's false claims that the 2020 election was riddled with fraud. Now, some Trump loyalists pushing for legal challenges and partisan audits are also targeting local officials in a bid to gain access to election systems — moves that themselves could undermine election security.</p> <p>An FBI spokeswoman confirmed Thursday that the bureau is investigating the incident in Lake County but declined to comment further. Investigators are trying to determine whether someone on the fifth floor of the Lake County government building improperly accessed the computer network and whether any laws were violated.</p> <p>Investigators with the office of Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose (R) believe a government official appears to have facilitated the attempted breach of the election network in Lake County, a spokesman for LaRose said.</p> <p>Asked in a telephone interview whether he knew of the attempted breach or participated in it, Hamercheck said he was advised not to discuss the investigation. "I'm aware of no criminal activity," Hamercheck said, and added: "I have absolute confidence in our board of elections and our IT people."</p> <p>Ahead of the incidents in Ohio and Colorado, county officials in both places — including Hamercheck — discussed claims of election fraud with Douglas Frank, an Ohio-based scientist who has done work for</p>

Lindell, according to people familiar with Frank's role, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe private discussions.

Frank, who has claimed to have discovered secret algorithms used to rig the 2020 election, has been traveling the country trying to convince election officials that the vote was riddled with fraud — and that they should join the effort to uncover it, he told The Washington Post in a series of interviews.

Frank has told The Post in recent months that he has visited “over 30 states” and has met with about 100 election administrators. He would not say how many local election administrators he has persuaded to join his cause. “I deliberately protect my clerks. I don't want anybody to know who they are,” Frank said.

In an interview Friday with The Post, Lindell said that although he has hired Frank for some projects, he does not fund Frank's speaking engagements across the country and knew nothing about what happened in the election offices in Mesa County or Lake County. “I have no idea what you're talking about,” he said.

In April, Frank traveled to Grand Junction, Colo., where he made his pitch during a public talk and also privately to Tina Peters, the clerk in Mesa County, and several of her colleagues. He told The Post that his presentation persuaded Peters of the need to examine whether fraud occurred, and that he subsequently connected her with someone in Lindell's circle who he believed could help.

An elections supervisor embraced conspiracy theories. Officials say she has become an insider threat.

Colorado election officials have since accused Peters of sneaking an outsider into Mesa County election offices to copy the hard drives of machines manufactured by Dominion Voting Systems, a company cited in conspiracy theories by Trump and his supporters.

In October, a state judge prohibited Peters from supervising the upcoming local elections, citing her efforts to copy the hard drives. On Wednesday, FBI agents searched her home and that of several of her associates as part of an investigation into possible wire fraud and computer crimes.

Peters has previously claimed that she has been targeted by powerful forces trying to block her from finding the truth. In a statement to The Post this week, a spokesperson for Peters's legal defense fund said the searches constituted “a level of weaponization of the Justice Department we haven't seen since the McCarthy era.”

Frank also took part in a discussion earlier this year with Hamercheck, the Lake County, Ohio, commissioner, according to an individual familiar with the incident, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the ongoing inquiries.

In an interview with The Post on Thursday, Frank said he did not remember speaking to Hamercheck or have any record of the call. He said he has met so many people in the past six months that he cannot recall them all. But Frank said the version of events described in Lake County sounded “plausible” because it was “exactly the model that we did with Tina.”

“Do I remember that call? No,” he said of the Hamercheck conversation. “Does it sound like me? Yes.”

County records obtained by The Post through a public-records request show that Hamercheck, an engineer and retired police officer, used his security badge to swipe into the fifth floor offices multiple times during the roughly six-hour period when, according to the leaked data, the laptop was intermittently connected to the county network on May 4, the date of Ohio's spring primaries.

Ohio election officials said they first learned of the attempted Lake County breach after Lindell's August symposium, where he promised to unveil evidence of widespread fraud across the country.

Copies of the Mesa County hard drive were presented publicly there, and cyber experts in attendance said they also received copies of network data obtained from Lake, Mesa and Clark County, Nev. Lindell told

The Post on Friday that the network data were distributed by a rogue attendee without his knowledge or permission.

Officials in all three states, as well as independent cyber experts interviewed by The Post, determined that the network data — known as packet captures, or PCAPs — contained no sensitive information from a protected network.

The data from Clark County — home of Las Vegas — was captured via the county’s guest wireless network, according to county officials. Rob Graham, a cybersecurity expert who attended the Lindell symposium and examined the data, said it was recorded on Dec. 1, 2020, with a laptop that was set up to capture only its own actions, not county network traffic.

Ohio state officials said the attempted breach in Lake County also yielded limited data, a possible sign that the person or people responsible may not have had technical expertise.

Ohio officials examined the data captured in Lake County and quickly determined that multiple layers of security prevented the compromise of election information or equipment. The network cable in Hamercheck’s office is connected to the county government network, but the county’s Board of Elections operates a separate network behind its own firewall that recognizes only authorized devices.

“We are thrilled that our infrastructure stayed strong,” said Ross McDonald, director of the Lake County Board of Elections, who added that the county is awaiting the results of the state and federal investigations.

After his office assessed the attempted breach, LaRose, who oversees election administration across Ohio’s 88 counties, referred the matter to federal, state and local investigators.

“It’s concerning that somebody would — especially somebody in a government office, somebody who is an elected official, or somebody who’s part of county government — would not realize all of those safeguards exist and would try to engage in some sort of a vigilante investigation,” LaRose said in an interview with The Post. “The good news is that our system of cyber security in Ohio is among the best in the nation.”

Officials with the Lake County prosecuting attorney and the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation did not respond to requests for comment.

Much like in Lake County, the Mesa County network data were captured in multiple sessions over the course of about four hours in May, nearly three weeks after the attempted breach in Ohio and on the same day a Mesa County voting machine hard drive was copied.

Local, state and federal authorities began investigating the alleged breach in Mesa shortly after Lindell’s symposium in August, when copies of hard drives from county voting machines were presented.

That same month, officials obtained search warrants to examine Peters’s cellphone data, take DNA swabs from election machines, remove Dominion equipment from Mesa County’s offices and obtain records to determine who obtained access to the secure tabulation room following Frank’s visit in April, as The Post previously reported.

This week, the FBI searched the homes of Peters and several of her associates, including Sherronna Bishop, a conservative activist and former campaign manager for Rep. Lauren Boebert (R-Colo.) who introduced Frank at his public talk in Grand Junction.

Lindell described the searches during an interview Tuesday on “War Room,” the podcast of former White House strategist Stephen K. Bannon. In a statement to The Post, Bishop accused the FBI of using “brute force” in executing the search warrant at her home, including using a battering ram to open her door and

handcuffing her in front of her children. She said she had been “available and transparent to any organization that wanted to speak with me” and accused the Justice Department of “terrorizing parents.”

In a statement, the Colorado attorney general’s office disputed those descriptions, saying that “this judicially authorized search was executed in a professional and lawful manner.” A spokeswoman for the FBI confirmed that the bureau “conducted authorized law enforcement actions . . . in support of an ongoing investigation” and declined to comment further.

The search warrants left at Bishop’s home indicate that the FBI is investigating potential crimes including intentional damage to a protected computer, wire fraud, conspiracy to cause intentional damage to a protected computer and conspiracy to commit wire fraud, according to details she shared in an interview with right-wing media personality Brannon Howse.

Frank argues that the 2020 election was tainted by an elaborate conspiracy involving inflated voter rolls, fraudulent ballots and a “sixth-order polynomial” — claims that have been repeatedly debunked.

Inside the ‘shadow reality world’ promoting the lie that the presidential election was stolen

One associate of Frank and Lindell is Conan James Hayes, a former pro surfer whom Frank described in an interview with The Post as a “white hat hacker” who has done projects for Lindell and has been responsible for obtaining and analyzing cyber evidence of fraud. Lindell told The Post that he has hired Hayes for several “piecework” jobs this year related to investigating election fraud, but none involved helping local officials obtain data from their networks or machines.

Asked whether he knew if Hayes was involved in gathering data from Lake and Mesa counties, Frank said: “I should probably not say. That’s just me being, I think, prudent.”

Hayes’s name also came up at the Lindell symposium, where Ron Watkins, the former administrator of the 8kun message board, where the QAnon conspiracy theory has been promoted, announced that Hayes may have stolen the hard drives from Mesa County.

A few moments later, Watkins said Hayes “did have permission to take the hard drive, but did not have permission to upload it.”

Watkins’s lawyer told the news outlet Vice that Hayes was Watkins’s source for the hard drives — but declined to discuss the matter in an interview with The Post.

Hayes could not be reached by phone and did not respond to emails seeking comment.

Metadata from the copied Mesa County hard drives show that the copies were made by someone using the identifier “cjh,” according to Graham and Harri Hursti, cybersecurity specialists who attended the Lindell symposium and reviewed the hard-drive copies. Those initials match those of Hayes.

Similarly, the Clark County data was captured by a computer called “cjh’s MacBook Pro (2),” according to Graham.

In both Lake and Mesa counties, the data were captured by the same type of gaming laptop, using the same software and same Windows operating system, metadata shows.

Hayes was one of seven people named in court documents who copied Dominion hard drives as part of a lawsuit filed by a local real estate agent who claimed election fraud in rural Antrim County, Mich., last fall. The hard drives, copied with permission of the court, allegedly showed that Dominion machines were rigged, according to a report submitted by the plaintiff in that case last December.

	That central claim of the report was immediately debunked by experts, including by the Department of Homeland Security, but it was cited by Trump and his allies as they sought to overturn President Biden's legitimate victory. A state judge dismissed the suit in May.
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HEADLINE	<b>11/19 Traveling in WA Thanksgiving holiday?</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattlepi.com/local/transportation/article/What-to-expect-if-you-re-traveling-in-Washington-16633468.php">https://www.seattlepi.com/local/transportation/article/What-to-expect-if-you-re-traveling-in-Washington-16633468.php</a>
GIST	<p>As millions of <a href="#">Washington</a> residents prepare to gather with their loved ones for the Thanksgiving holiday next week, state officials are urging travelers to plan ahead and expect delays while flying, driving or sailing to their destination.</p> <p>AAA predicts 53.4 million people, more than 1.4 million from Washington, will travel for the Thanksgiving holiday, an increase of 13% and 16% respectively from 2020. The forecast also shows national travel volumes within 5% of pre-pandemic levels in 2019, 2% above for Washington.</p> <p>"This Thanksgiving, travel will look a lot different than last year," said Kelly Just, spokesperson for AAA Washington. "With borders reopened, plus new health and safety guidelines in place, travel is once again high on the list of Americans ready to reunite with their loved ones for the holiday."</p> <p>Depending on your mode of transportation, keep reading for a breakdown on what to expect over the holiday week.</p> <p><b>Driving</b></p> <p>The state Department of Transportation has identified <a href="#">three problem areas</a> where it expects traffic to be the heaviest next week: On Interstate 90 between North Bend and Cle Elum; Interstate 5 between Tacoma and Lacey; and Highway 2 between Stevens Pass and Skykomish.</p> <p>On I-90 between North Bend and Cle Elum, the department expects, per usual, the heaviest congestion in the eastbound lanes earlier in the week — on Wednesday and Thursday — and in westbound lanes over the weekend.</p> <p>If you're headed east over the Cascades next week, expect stop-and-go traffic between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. on Wednesday. The department is forecasting moderate-to-heavy congestion between 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Thursday, and between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. on Friday. Stop-and-go traffic will also be seen in eastbound lanes over the weekend — between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Saturday, and between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. on Sunday.</p> <p>Travelers headed west over I-90 next week can expect stop-and-go traffic between 1 and 3 p.m. Wednesday, moderate-to-heavy congestion between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Thursday, and between 9 a.m. on 5 p.m. on Friday. The heaviest congestion in the westbound lanes will be on the weekend, with stop-and-go traffic expected between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Saturday and between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. on Sunday.</p> <p>Driving on Interstate 5 between Lacey to Tacoma next week will be a disaster regardless of when you're traveling. The department is expecting moderate-to-heavy congestion in both directions in the morning and evening Wednesday through Sunday. Stop-and-go traffic is generally forecasted between the late morning and late afternoon.</p> <p>Of the three problem areas, traffic will be lightest on Highway 2. Eastbound travelers can expect moderate-to-heavy congestion between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. on Wednesday, and between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Thursday. Stop-and-go traffic is expected between 11 a.m. and noon on Friday and Saturday, and light traffic is expected in eastbound lanes on Sunday.</p> <p>Westbound travelers can expect light traffic Wednesday and Thursday. Moderate-to-heavy congestion is expected between 1 and 4 p.m. on Thursday, between 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. on Saturday, and between 10</p>



a.m. and 6 p.m. on Sunday.

The National Weather Service (NWS) is expecting snow on Snoqualmie Pass on Wednesday, with rain though the end of the week.

### **Flying**

Seattle-Tacoma International Airport expects to see pre-pandemic levels of fliers next week, with an estimated 1.5 million people traveling through the airport between Wednesday and Monday. That's 150% more people than the airport saw last year.

A number of factors — including pandemic-related closures and construction — have reduced the number of parking stalls in and around the airport. Without a reservation, the airport estimates you could wait 30 minutes or more to find an open space.

Airport officials recommend taking the Link light rail — Sound Transit recently added three new stations at the airport's north end — or utilizing a ride share service to get to the airport. There are also bike racks at the airport if you want to bike there.

If you're picking someone up, the airport recommends using its [cell phone lot](#), a parking lot with 200 spaces directly across from the S. 170th St. exit of the Airport Expressway. You can also balance the flow of traffic by using the departure drive for pickups at night and the arrivals drive for pickups in the morning.

The airport is also expecting heavy congestion in its security lines. You can use the airport's [SEA Spot Saver](#) program to get a reservation at a special TSA screening hub, which allows you to skip the long general-screening lines.

In general, officials recommend getting to the airport at least two hours before domestic flights and three hours before international flights. Masks are to be worn inside the airport at all times unless actively eating or drinking.

### **Sailing**

The state Department of Transportation is also expecting longer-than-normal wait times when boarding ferries.

The department says the busiest sailings will likely be westbound (or onto an island) Wednesday afternoon through Thursday morning. Then eastbound (or off island) Thursday afternoon through Friday. To reduce or eliminate waiting times, the department says riders should consider taking an early morning or late night sailing.

There could be scheduling changes on Thursday depending on staff availability. The department recommends signing up for ferry [email alerts](#) before traveling. The latest sailing schedules can be found on the department's [website](#).

The department acknowledges that its [recent staff shortages](#) have created difficulties, but it says it has been actively recruiting new employees and has been able to add additional sailings nearly every day.

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HEADLINE	11/19 Seattle housing vouchers go unused
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/seattle-got-more-than-1300-federal-housing-vouchers-so-far-only-10-people-have-used-them/">https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/seattle-got-more-than-1300-federal-housing-vouchers-so-far-only-10-people-have-used-them/</a>
GIST	An unprecedented number of rental subsidies have poured into the Seattle area since May, a national attempt to quickly put as many people living on the streets and in shelters into housing as possible. But almost none of those subsidies are yet in use.

A total of 70,000 new emergency housing vouchers hit cities and counties nationwide as part of the Biden administration's ambitious plan to fight homelessness while the country recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic, injecting \$5 billion into the country's anemic housing-subsidy system. Housing authorities in the Seattle area — representing public housing in King County, Seattle and Renton — received more than 1,300 vouchers, one of the largest investments they'd seen in years.

But six months after the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's announcement, only 10 people in King County have been able to obtain leases with the new emergency vouchers, underlining the challenge of distributing rental money through a complex homelessness-services system during a longtime housing shortage.

Local officials first spent weeks building up a labyrinthine system to route the vouchers to the people who need them the most.

Now officials must connect with homeless people who have been severed from services during the pandemic. Then, the challenge is to find landlords in a tight housing market who will take new tenants with sometimes spotty rental histories and poor credit.

While the Regional Homelessness Authority, local housing agencies and nonprofits say that they are working as fast as they can, Seattle's rate of using the vouchers is one of the lowest in the country — while the number of people living outside is one of the highest.

Danielle Garcia, senior policy adviser in HUD's Office of Public Housing and Voucher Programs, said it's not uncommon for new programs to have slower rollouts, particularly if they focus on vulnerable populations.

HUD has reached out to Seattle's housing authority to figure out what issues it's encountering, she added.

#### **A complicated system built on scarcity**

The federal government distributes much of its rental assistance money to housing authorities across the country in the form of vouchers.

The vouchers go to low-income people who can use them on the private market and guarantee landlords that the government will cover a portion of the tenants' rent. Most housing authorities build affordable housing, manage public housing and oversee these vouchers; they are rarely part of the formal homelessness system.

But to dole out the new emergency housing vouchers issued as part of the American Rescue Plan Act to people who are homeless, housing authorities are required to work with their local homelessness systems. In King County's case, the housing authorities are working with the newly created King County Regional Homelessness Authority.

And that's where things get complicated.

When the vouchers arrived this May, the recently created Regional Homelessness Authority was still staffing up — by September there were just eight full-time staff. They were tasked with identifying people who needed housing most urgently.

To do that, they needed nonprofits that administer homeless services to find people who qualify.

The Regional Homelessness Authority then tried to create a racially equitable system to distribute these vouchers among community organizations, including smaller nonprofits that hadn't before received public funding.

The authority created an algorithm to allocate vouchers that took into account factors like domestic violence programming, the demographics of people served and whether organizations' leaders were people of color.

Anne Martens, communications director for the Regional Homelessness Authority, said setting up the algorithm, surveying nonprofits and building relationships with those organizations had never been done before and took several weeks.

Once nonprofits find people eligible for vouchers, they send their applications to the Regional Homelessness Authority, which screens them for the housing authorities. Housing authorities then hand out the vouchers. But that's not the end of the process.

The voucher recipients then work with the nonprofits to find suitable housing.

Some of the nonprofits allocated vouchers by the algorithm also didn't think they had the capacity to use all of them, according to Martens, and others are still considering whether to participate.

### **Searching the private market**

Once people are matched with vouchers, their next challenge is to find housing on the private market.

Housing scarcity shapes every part of the homelessness system, particularly the process for getting people out of it.

There simply isn't enough housing for everyone who wants it, even with this infusion of cash.

Officials with the housing authorities and the homeless-services system see this as one of the biggest obstacles to overcome.

All the employment, mental health, substance-use disorder or criminal record help available won't be effective without a housing unit to put someone in, said Kristy Johnson, King County Housing Authority's director of policy, research and social impact.

"We know we're going to have to pull out all stops to find units here," Johnson said.

Even within the last few months, Johnson has seen the housing market tighten. In February of 2021, 81% of people looking for housing with federal Section 8 vouchers were able to find housing within 120 days.

Since then, that rate has dropped to 40%.

And while both Seattle and King County have laws that prohibit landlords from barring tenants based on how they pay their rent, a competitive rental market still makes it difficult for people with vouchers to find landlords willing to rent to them.

### **Less than 1% of vouchers leased so far**

Still, Seattle's low rate of voucher usage contrasts sharply with the urgent need for them. According to the county's last survey of homelessness at the beginning of 2020, 11,751 people were homeless in King County.

So far, seven people matched with vouchers through the King County Housing Authority leased up with them as of Nov. 17. The King County Housing Authority holds 762 available vouchers.

Just three people have landed leases with a voucher through the Seattle Housing Authority, which has 498 vouchers. And no one has been matched with any of the Renton Housing Authority's 54 vouchers.

Public housing authorities in the Seattle area are below the national average for voucher utilization — 5.7%. Together, the three local housing authorities — Seattle, King County and Renton — are far

outpaced by smaller cities in Washington, including Vancouver, which has a nearly 66% utilization rate compared to the Seattle area's 0.8%.

Federal data shows other metropolitan areas with some of the largest homeless populations similarly struggling to get leases signed.

As of Nov. 17, Los Angeles' housing authority had just 23 voucher recipients with leases. The city and county of San Francisco had four, according to the federal government's voucher-tracking dashboard.

Portland had none.

### **Stretched by the pandemic**

Some large social service organizations saw few referrals from the Regional Homelessness Authority. Catholic Community Services of Western Washington submitted all of its 21 referrals, which came from a pool of roughly 500 clients who could have used them, according to Catholic Community Services deputy director Dan Wise.

Yet other homeless services nonprofits said they weren't given enough time to find and work with vulnerable people for the voucher applications.

Chief Seattle Club, a Native-led homeless-services nonprofit, received 126 voucher referral slots, the most voucher allocations of any service provider in the Seattle area. Yet as of Nov. 9, the organization had referred just six people to the homelessness authority.

"We have a list of folks we're working with and filling out their applications, but due to the pandemic it's hard to go out and meet people," said Nawiishtunmi Nightgun, Chief Seattle Club's director of programs.

The club's day center has been shuttered since the pandemic began and many of the organization's members have scattered, making them difficult to track down, Nightgun said.

Nightgun added that she sees impractical deadlines as a trend.

"When it comes to marginalized populations this county always pushes racial equity benchmarks and making sure we serve all these communities," Nightgun said. "And then they give us this opportunity and it's totally rushed."

Febben Fekadu, housing director at nonprofit Evergreen Treatment Services and its REACH outreach program, said her organization is dealing with similar issues. It's difficult to get paperwork in order for clients living outdoors in tents and in vehicles.

"A lot of social services are operating under capacity right now," Fekadu added.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/19 British Columbia gas, travel restrictions</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/british-columbia-sets-gas-travel-restrictions-after-floods/">https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/british-columbia-sets-gas-travel-restrictions-after-floods/</a>
GIST	<p>VANCOUVER, British Columbia — The British Columbia government announced Friday it is limiting the amount of fuel people can purchase at gas stations in some parts of the province and is restricting nonessential travel as highways begin to reopen following torrential rains that caused floods and mudslides.</p> <p>Provincial Public Safety Minister Mike Farnworth said nonessential vehicles will be limited to about 8 gallons (30 liters) per trip to the gas station. The order is expected to last until Dec. 1.</p> <p>"These steps will keep commercial traffic moving, stabilize our supply chains and make sure everyone gets home safely," Farnworth said at a news conference. "We are asking people not to travel through</p>

severely affected areas, for their own well-being, but also to make sure the fuel we do have goes toward the services people need in this time of crisis.”

Environment Canada says 24 B.C. communities received close to 4 inches (100 millimeters) of rain from Saturday to Monday.

The precautionary closure of the Trans Mountain Pipeline during the flooding has raised concerns about a fuel shortage in province’s Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island. Assessments of the pipeline continue.

Farnworth said police will not patrol gas stations to make sure customers are complying with the new restrictions.

“The majority of British Columbians will do the right thing,” he said. “If we are greedy, we will fail. It’s that’s simple.”

The government also has prohibited nonessential travel on sections of several highways.

Transportation Minister Rob Fleming said vehicles transporting essential products or delivering vital services can use the highways. So can people returning to their principle residences after being stranded.

“It is not open to recreational or nonessential travel,” he said.

Fleming said the highways between Vancouver and Hope, and from Hope to Princeton had been opened to vehicles.

“This will reestablish a vital link allowing for the movement of essential goods and services,” he said.

A section of highway near Pemberton, where one person is confirmed dead in a landslide that swept vehicles off a road and a search continues for four people believed to be missing, could be open by Sunday.

Fleming thanked the federal government for announcing “some very helpful measures” to fast track B.C. truckers traveling to the U.S.

The U.S. is temporarily relaxing some permit requirements so B.C. trucks can cross into Washington state and then re-enter Canada past the damaged highways.

Agriculture Minister Lana Popham said 959 farms remain under an evacuation order and 50,656 acres (20,500 hectares) remain affected by the flood.

Also, 35 veterinarians, many from Alberta, are on standby to assist the province.

Fleming said there is no timeline for when temporary and permanent repairs will be completed to the highways or estimates for what the costs will be.

“It’s going to be very, very significant,” he said.

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HEADLINE	11/19 FAA memo: widespread Boeing 787 defects
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.seattletimes.com/business/boeing-aerospace/faa-memo-reveals-more-boeing-787-manufacturing-defects-including-contamination-of-carbon-fiber-composites/">https://www.seattletimes.com/business/boeing-aerospace/faa-memo-reveals-more-boeing-787-manufacturing-defects-including-contamination-of-carbon-fiber-composites/</a>
GIST	The litany of manufacturing defects on the 787 Dreamliner is expanding as Boeing engineers take apart planes and discover new or more widespread issues, a Federal Aviation Administration internal memo indicates.

The FAA memo, which was circulated internally Monday and reviewed by The Seattle Times, points to new concerns about a previously unreported defect caused by contamination of the carbon fiber composite material during fabrication of the large structures that make up the 787's wing, fuselage and tail.

The memo also adds detail about the small out-of-tolerance gaps that have been discovered throughout the airplane structure: at the joins of the large fuselage sections, at a forward pressure bulkhead and in the structure surrounding the passenger and cargo doors.

The FAA memo, which lists safety conditions affecting airplanes currently in service worldwide, states that these tiny gap defects are thought to be present in more than 1,000 Dreamliners. These are not considered an immediate safety concern but could cause premature aging of the airframe.

"We're looking at the undelivered airplanes nose to tail, and we have found areas where the manufacturing does not conform to the engineering specifications," a Boeing spokesperson said Friday. "None of these issues is an immediate safety-of-flight issue."

Those planes currently in service can be inspected and reworked later during routine maintenance, the spokesperson said.

However, complicating the process, the FAA memo states that Boeing doesn't have the detailed configuration data on each plane to know which may have the defects.

It's unclear if coming up with fixes that will satisfy the FAA will further delay resumption of 787 deliveries into next year.

Such a delay could increase the total cost to get the 787 program back on track above Boeing's previous \$1 billion estimate and would risk an accounting write-off in the fourth quarter.

### **Contamination of composite material**

The internal FAA memo relates how, early this year, Boeing reported to the FAA that Mitsubishi Heavy Industries in Japan — which builds the jet's carbon composite wings — had discovered contamination of the composite material during fabrication that could potentially weaken the epoxy bonding that gives the structure its strength.

In the fabrication process for composites, carbon fiber tape impregnated with epoxy resin is laid on a mold, then hardened in a high-pressure oven called an autoclave.

Bags are placed around the composite material to create a vacuum, and a thin sheet may be placed between the composites and the mold to facilitate release when it comes out of the autoclave. The contamination occurred because some of the bagging and release materials contained polytetrafluoroethylene — commonly known by the brand name Teflon.

The use of PTFE, which left a residue after removal, did not comply with Boeing's manufacturing specifications.

Initial tests conducted by Boeing and reported to the FAA in April showed a positive outcome: although the bond strength was reduced, it was still within the design limits.

However, the memo includes a new update from late last month, in which Boeing told the FAA that the same contamination has now been found at other major suppliers and affects not only the wing but also the fuselage and tail.

In addition, further tests of small pieces of the composites now indicated that the strength of the contaminated material in some cases was below the allowed design limits.

Boeing last month suggested to the FAA an approach to evaluating the integrity of the bonds in the affected structures. But the FAA isn't convinced. It responded that the proposed evaluation method is not approved and not validated by testing.

"The FAA will investigate," the memo states.

Boeing's communications team said Friday it did not immediately have details on the contamination issue and could not comment on that specific issue before press time.

An FAA spokesperson said, "We don't comment on ongoing discussions with manufacturers."

### **Fixing tiny gaps at the airplane doors**

The FAA memo also highlights the discovery of small gaps in the structure surrounding the passenger and cargo doors in the aft fuselage section, built by Leonardo in Italy.

This is another instance of the tiny gaps that have been discovered in the airplane structure during final assembly, previously found at the major fuselage section joins and at the forward pressure bulkhead, a dome-shaped structural barrier behind the plane's nose that is crucial to maintaining air pressure within the cockpit and passenger cabin.

Like those previous instances, the gaps in the structure around the aft fuselage doors result from waviness in the composite material at the joins.

The FAA notes that these discrepancies between the manufactured structure and the engineering specification are the result not of bad workmanship by mechanics, but of imprecision in the robotic equipment used to fabricate the airplane's structures.

Such gaps, which may occur in metal airplanes, too, are typically filled with small pieces of material called shims during assembly. But somehow the gaps were missed during the building of the airplane sections by Boeing suppliers.

The lack of shims can cause the skin fasteners to pull away, the FAA said.

The FAA memo notes that Leonardo relies on mechanics to inspect their own work when they assemble the structures, with limited or no oversight by quality inspectors. And it states that the Italian supplier had two formal notices of missed inspections for surface waviness in 2018 and two more in 2020.

In an update this month, the FAA said that although Boeing provided a presentation contending that the gaps in the structure around the aft fuselage doors were within engineering requirements, it did not provide detailed manufacturing data on the condition of assembly of each plane.

The memo declares the FAA "skeptical."

As it awaits FAA approval of an inspection method, Boeing is going ahead with fixes on some planes.

The Boeing spokesperson said that its engineers had been trying to come up with a standard procedure to remove the doors and inspect the surrounding structure that would satisfy the FAA, but that because this was taking too long it had begun reworking some initial planes.

"We have been trying to determine a door removal and inspection approach to see [if we can] plan a nondestructive inspection method to determine what we need to do going forward. That's taken more time," the spokesperson said. "So we have started rework on the door structure just in the near term, to try to be able to move forward with certain airplanes."

Meanwhile, Boeing has paused assembly of the aft fuselages in South Carolina while it sorts out the problem.



The Wall Street Journal was first to report Friday the latest issue with the structure around the door. The Journal cited unidentified people familiar with the plans saying that it is increasingly likely that Boeing won't resume delivering 787s until "February or March at the earliest."

### **1,000-plus airplanes**

The FAA memo reviewed by The Seattle Times also provides updates on another 787 defect problem: the use of an incorrect alloy of titanium in certain fittings installed in fuselage sections made by Leonardo in Italy.

Parts with this incorrect metal included fuselage frame and floor beam fittings and were installed on more than 450 Dreamliners. Boeing identified the most critical installation as the floor-beam-to-fuselage-frame fittings at the side of body area where the wings attach.

The FAA said this could produce an unsafe condition if two or more adjacent fittings had used the wrong titanium alloy. Two aircraft with this immediate safety concern were identified, both All Nippon Airways jets that were parked in Victorville, California.

ANA agreed to keep the aircraft grounded while Boeing fixed them. That work was completed as of last month.

Finally, the memo notes that the FAA is still evaluating Boeing's proposal to use statistical sampling to determine which airplanes are affected by the lack of shims and tiny gaps at the joins.

The memo states that more than 1,000 airplanes currently flying are affected and that the FAA is concerned about the lack of detailed assembly data on every airplane. Boeing submitted its proposal for inspections and indicated that the process would not require FAA approval.

"We firmly disagree," the memo states. This standoff over what level of inspections is appropriate remains the major stumbling block to Boeing resuming 787 deliveries.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/19 Tacoma Transgender Day of Remembrance</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/tacoma/tacoma-recognizes-transgender-day-of-remembrance/281-66b5e081-e214-406e-ad67-090a34cb8924">https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/tacoma/tacoma-recognizes-transgender-day-of-remembrance/281-66b5e081-e214-406e-ad67-090a34cb8924</a>
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. — Tacoma officially acknowledged Transgender Day of Remembrance on Friday for the first time in the city's history. City workers raised the flag representing the Transgender community over the municipal building.</p> <p>Astro Pittman, who serves as board member at-large for the Diversity Alliance of the Puget Sound, said it's necessary to showcase the humanity within the Transgender community, because they say it's ignored far too often, which leaves them vulnerable across the globe.</p> <p>"Transgender people are murdered at a higher rate than any other demographic in the world, and that includes people of color, low income, etc," Pittman said. "Transgender people are much more likely to suffer from systemic violence, fatal violence, and some of the ways that they are killed are absolutely horrific because of the fear and hate and ignorance that exists about the Transgender community."</p> <p>Pittman said the tragedy is made even worse because people don't know about it.</p> <p>"We don't talk about it. Nobody knows about it in many cases. If you aren't a part of the LGBTQ+ community, you might not even know this is a thing that is happening," they revealed.</p> <p>Now Tacoma is paying attention. City workers raised the flag representing the Transgender community over the municipal building in honor of Transgender Day of Remembrance</p>

	<p>But while onlookers cheered, they also took time to remember those who were lost.</p> <p>“2021 has already seen at least 56 Transgender and gender non-conforming individuals fatally shot or killed or other violent means in the United States,” said Oliver Wells, board chair of the Diversity Alliance of the Puget Sound. “The majority were Black and Latinx Transgender women. The Pacific Northwest has already seen five and Washington has already seen two.”</p> <p>Pittman and Wells are now calling on the community to push beyond just being aware, and work towards making sure people like them are truly cared for.</p> <p>“When you hear someone say something transphobic, when you hear someone saying something racist, you need to stand up for your community. You need to stand up and say something against these things. These things are not jokes,” Wells said.</p> <p>“Each of us as individuals has an opportunity to be more present in the way that we stand with the Transgender community, and give them the community that they might be missing, never had, and desperately need,” Pittman said.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>11/19 Bellevue students walk out: ‘want action’</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/student-protest-newport-high-school-leads-lockdown/KDIBOJE4PVGMMNFUOBO6LERVHHE/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/student-protest-newport-high-school-leads-lockdown/KDIBOJE4PVGMMNFUOBO6LERVHHE/</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>BELLEVUE, Wash. — A student walk-out at a Bellevue high school put the school on lockdown Friday, as students expressed their frustration with school and district leaders.</p> <p>Newport High School students chanted, “We want action” after a student who says she is a victim of physical abuse claims the school nor the district have done enough to make her feel safe on campus.</p> <p>“I came out about being assaulted by another student at Newport High School,” says 17-year-old Alex Su, who spoke to KIRO 7 with the permission of parents.</p> <p>“It was really nice to know that so many people supported me and so many people that I didn’t even know were coming up to me and telling me that they supported me,” says Su.</p> <p>She adds she and the student organizers have since been expelled, “We are literally begging for help, and you’re expelling us. That doesn’t make any sense. We are begging for help and they are openly turning us away.”</p> <p>The school ended up going into a lockdown to get a handle on what they called a substantial disruption to the educational process.</p> <p>In a statement to KIRO 7, district leaders say “Our school made the decision to go into lockdown status because the school environment was unsafe as a result of those actions.”</p> <p>“I think that the Bellevue School District is really well known for putting this inclusivity front and this whole like we support our students we love diversity, but it’s not true. I think that so many people need to know that that’s not true,” says Su.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>11/19 Rats infest homeless camp behind school</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/project-seattle/rats-now-plague-neighborhood-encampment-behind-broadview-thompson-k-8-school">https://komonews.com/news/project-seattle/rats-now-plague-neighborhood-encampment-behind-broadview-thompson-k-8-school</a>

SEATTLE — There's a new problem at the homeless encampment behind Broadview Thomson K-8 that has unsettled residents of the Seattle neighborhood.

Residents said rats are scurrying through their neighborhood and they are feasting on festering piles of trash that have proliferated from camp residents, who people in the area say are producing mounds of garbage and discarded needles.

More than 30 campers continue to live at the site, which appeared in July 2020 and is located behind property owned by Seattle Public Schools.

During the spring, crews came and removed the trash, which has since returned.

Piles of trash from an encampment at Broadview Thompson K-8 school has led to a rat infestation.

"Yesterday was the first time I've gone down there to look for a couple of weeks," said Bill Steel, who lives in the neighborhood next to the encampment. "And it made me sick to my stomach."

The school district reached out to a group called Anything Helps to move the unsheltered off the streets. Over the summer, the organization was able to get the city to conduct regular weekly trash pick-ups at the location, but those have since been discontinued.

"It wasn't adequate to solve the rat problem," said Mike Mathias, the group's executive director. "And that has been getting progressively worse."

The rat problem is dangerous for neighbors and campers like Anthony Pieper, who has lived at the site for more than a year.

"We have dealt with it, too," Pieper said. "It's obviously not the most sanitary conditions."

"You go out there at night and it's not good," Mathias said. "It's a health hazard."

Neighbors want the school district to act.

"This falls squarely on the shoulders of Seattle Public Schools," Steele said. "And their complete inaction."

District officials said in an email to KOMO News that they and the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation have rented dumpsters along with hiring a third-party contractor to manage the waste.

One of the large dumpsters appeared around 3 p.m. at the encampment.

A large dumpster was brought into an area to collect garbage from a nearby encampment.

Neighbors who live around the school said they want the encampment to be cleaned up and resolved.

"It's just not great conditions for campers or for us or for anybody," said Tom Reddy, who lives in the area. "It's just not."

Officials said they plan to open 20 tiny homes next week at a new village which will be for Broadview Thomson camp residents.

In a written statement, district officials said: "Seattle Public Schools, in partnership with the City of Seattle, King County and Anything Helps, is fully transitioning Bitter Lake encampment residents to shelter or housing by mid-December. Several people have already transitioned out, leaving belongings and other materials behind. Seattle Public Schools and Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation have rented dumpsters and hired a third-party contractor to manage the disposal of unwanted items. As Seattle Public

	Schools continues our commitment to providing safe and welcoming environments for students, families, and staff, we also remain steadfast in finding safe options and support for encampment residents that will allow them to leave the cycle of homelessness."
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HEADLINE	<b>11/19 King Co, Seattle land swap agreement</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/king-county-seattle-reach-agreement-on-land-swap-involving-city-hall-park">https://komonews.com/news/local/king-county-seattle-reach-agreement-on-land-swap-involving-city-hall-park</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - King County and the City of Seattle have come to an agreement on a land swap to transfer ownership of City Hall Park from the City of Seattle to King County.</p> <p>The agreement is part of an exchange for multiple county-owned properties including a park adjacent to the South Park Bridge and Cesar Chavez Park.</p> <p>In exchange for the transfer of the .56-acre City Hall Park, just south of the King County Courthouse, King County will transfer 13 parcels of land totaling 1.35 acres to the City.</p> <p>The transfer also switches law enforcement authority to the King County Sheriff's Office.</p> <p>The troubled green space owned by the city was home to a large homeless encampment that was cleared in August after safety concerns and a fatal stabbing.</p> <p>"Ensuring public lands continue to be used for the public good is an important mission not just in open spaces, but within our urban centers as well," said Executive Constantine. "City Hall Park will allow King County to map out a vision for a complete downtown Civic Campus, including exploring reopening the historic Courthouse entrance and engaging the surrounding neighborhoods, while keeping the land for public use."</p>
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## Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	<b>11/22 NCSC: hackers targeted online retailers</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.zdnet.com/article/hackers-targeted-thousands-of-online-retailers-to-steal-credit-card-details/">https://www.zdnet.com/article/hackers-targeted-thousands-of-online-retailers-to-steal-credit-card-details/</a>
GIST	<p>Over 4,000 online retailers have been warned that their websites had been hacked by cyber criminals trying to steal payment information and other personal information from customers.</p> <p>In total, the <a href="#">National Cyber Security Centre</a> (NCSC) has identified a total of 4,151 retailers that had been compromised by hackers attempting to exploit vulnerabilities on checkout pages to divert payments and steal details. They alerted the retailers to the breaches over the past 18 months.</p> <p>The majority of the online shops that cyber criminals exploited for payment-skimming attacks were compromised by <a href="#">known vulnerabilities in e-commerce platform Magento</a>. Most of those affected and alerted to the compromises and vulnerabilities are small and medium-sized businesses.</p> <p>The NCSC revealed the number of businesses it has notified about customer data being stolen ahead of <a href="#">Black Friday</a>. It is urging all retailers to ensure that their websites are secure ahead of the busiest online shopping period of the year in order to protect their business – and their customers – from cyber criminals.</p> <p>"We want small and medium-sized online retailers to know how to prevent their sites being exploited by opportunistic cyber criminals over the peak shopping period," said Sarah Lyons, deputy director for economy and society at the NCSC. "Falling victim to cybercrime could leave you and your customers out of pocket and cause reputational damage."</p>

One of the key things that online retailers can do to help prevent payments and personal data being stolen is to [apply the available security patches](#) that stop cyber criminals from being able to exploit known vulnerabilities in Magento and any other software they use.

"It's important to keep websites as secure as possible and I would urge all business owners to follow our guidance and make sure their software is up to date," said Lyons.

Applying security patches in a timely manner is just one of the things recommended by the NCSC's and British Retail [Consortium's Cyber Resilience Toolkit For Retail](#). This kit was [released in October 2020](#), but the information on keeping websites secure from cyberattacks is still very much relevant today.

"Skimming and other cybersecurity breaches are a threat to all retailers," said Graham Wynn, assistant director for consumer, competition and regulatory affairs at the British Retail Consortium.

"The British Retail Consortium strongly urges all retailers to follow the NCSC's advice and check their preparedness for any cyber issues that could arise during the busy end-of-year period."

The compromised shopping websites were identified as part of the [NCSC's Active Cyber Defence programme](#), which has been monitoring for vulnerabilities that could impact online retailers since April 2020.

The NCSC has also [reiterated advice to consumers](#) on how to stay safe when shopping online. The advice includes being selective about where you shop, only providing necessary information, ensuring the payment system used is protected, and keeping online accounts secure.

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HEADLINE	11/22 NKorea snooping on China cyber squad
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thedailybeast.com/north-korean-hackers-caught-snooping-on-chinas-cyber-squad?ref=home?ref=home">https://www.thedailybeast.com/north-korean-hackers-caught-snooping-on-chinas-cyber-squad?ref=home?ref=home</a>
GIST	<p>A real diplomat is one who can cut his neighbor's throat without having his neighbor notice it, Trygve Lie, former secretary-general of the United Nations, once <a href="#">allegedly</a> said.</p> <p>The North Korean government seems to have understood the assignment.</p> <p>Hackers with suspected links to the Pyongyang dictatorship have been going after Chinese security researchers in an apparent attempt to steal their hacking techniques and use them as their own, according to CrowdStrike research shared exclusively with The Daily Beast.</p> <p>In this case, North Korean hackers targeted Chinese security researchers with Chinese-language lure documents labeled "Securitystatuscheck.zip" and "_signed.pdf," in the hopes that the researchers would be compelled to click on them. While the documents, which CrowdStrike uncovered in June, contained cybersecurity information from China's Ministry of Public Security and the National Information Security Standardization Technical Committee, the hacking team was likely sending booby-trapped documents.</p> <p>The North Korean hacking gang responsible, which cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike calls "Stardust Chollima"—and which other researchers label Lazarus Group—in all likelihood sent the lures over email, Adam Meyers, vice president of intelligence at CrowdStrike, told The Daily Beast. CrowdStrike does not have access to those emails or the initial routes to victims, but this campaign appears to imitate earlier North Korean hacking missions that used email and social media to attempt distributing malware to security researchers, says Meyers.</p> <p>The tactic of targeting security researchers in other countries could be particularly useful for the North Korean government. It could broaden Kim Jong Un's hacking team's roadmap to outsmarting other hackers around the world. And these operations, Meyers told The Daily Beast, likely make it possible for the North Koreans to steal exploits or learn new hacking skills they otherwise wouldn't have.</p>

For North Korea, which runs hacking operations aimed at raising revenue to fund the regime—including its nuclear weapons program—new hacking know-how could make all the difference.

“For vulnerability research in particular that would be interesting—it in effect allows you to collect and steal weapons that you can use for other operations. It could also give them insight into new techniques that they’re not aware of and how research is being conducted,” Meyers said. “It also lets you know what the security posture looks like in other countries.”

It’s just the latest signal that the North Korean government may be working to obtain new hacking techniques and tools in an effort to run financially motivated hacking operations. But instead of diligent, internal research, this hacking campaign suggests that instead of innovating on their own, they’re straight up working to crib hacking playbooks from security researchers abroad.

It wouldn’t be the first time. North Korean hackers earlier this year ran an elaborate campaign, complete with a fake security research blog, a fake company, and bogus Twitter personas, to try hacking security researchers and collect intelligence on their latest cybersecurity work, according to an [investigation](#) published earlier this year by [Google](#). In that campaign, the hackers targeted researchers via Twitter, LinkedIn, Telegram, Discord, Keybase, and email, using aliases such as Billy Brown and Guo Zhang, later lacing malware capable of stealing files on their computers.

But the hackers don’t appear to have stopped. The campaign in China is likely an extension and continuation of that earlier campaign targeting security researchers, with a focus on neighboring China this time around, according to CrowdStrike.

Meyers said the hacking branches of the North Korean government are likely being ordered to find ways to fund regime goals, with a focus on, “how do you make sure you have access to the latest vulnerabilities, the latest exploitation techniques, the latest research that’s going on. There’s constantly innovation in that space [and] this helps the North Korean intelligence services improve their capabilities by stealing this type of information,” he said.

In particular, the North Korean hacking team could be interested in obtaining especially sensitive vulnerabilities called “zero days,” which are software or hardware flaws that companies don’t know about and therefore can’t fix, making them especially powerful if they’re used. The vulnerabilities are known as zero days because the companies, if they ever find someone taking advantage, will have zero days to patch.

Chinese hackers are prolific at obtaining zero days, making them a ripe target for any hacking team interested in running off with someone else’s find, Vikram Thakur, a technical director at Symantec, told The Daily Beast

Chinese security researchers are a prime target, as “the most number of zero days found by any country in the world is probably China,” said Thakur, who is dedicated to tracking North Korean hacking teams. “In my opinion... Lazarus [Group] or North Korea would have been trying to arm themselves with zero days.”

China is, indeed, at the top of its game when it comes to zero days, according to [FireEye](#) research. Over the last decade, North Korea used three zero days. But China’s used 20—far more than any other country.

At least, China *had* the most prowess in this department last year. As the thinking goes, North Korea might be trying to ride China’s coattails and change that balance. James Sadowski, a senior analyst in strategic analysis at Mandiant Threat Intelligence, told The Daily Beast last week the number of zero days used has only been creeping up since they first published their report. The count now is at 76, according to Sadowski.

“It’s always hard to know [the] real end goal of attackers,” said Anton Cherepanov, a senior malware researcher at the Slovakia-based cybersecurity firm [ESET](#), who recently found what he thinks is



	<p>potentially another prong of the broad campaign against security researchers. (Early this month, Cherepanov found a popular reverse-engineering software, IDA Pro, was tampered with—software that is almost exclusively used by security researchers.)</p> <p>“In case of Chinese researchers, I guess that the attackers are interested in vulnerabilities [and, or] exploits for certain products,” Cherepanov said.</p> <p>Either way, this campaign targeting Chinese language hackers looked particularly determined. One of the best ways to get targets to click on documents laden with malware or spammy links is to instill fear in victims—such as by claiming an urgent task is at hand, by referencing their sensitive information, or by imitating a boss or controlling authority. By referencing Chinese government security authorities, the lures appear to have been very well-tailored for Chinese nationals, and in particular, security experts.</p> <p>”In China, generally any email coming from any governmental-sounding body is considered the highest priority for any individual in the country,” Thakur said. “If a researcher gets a technical sounding email from the government, the chances of that researcher, that end-user clicking on the lure is extremely high.”</p> <p>It’s unclear from the CrowdStrike research if the North Koreans were able to claim any victims, but even a mere attempt at hacking security researchers in neighboring China shows these hacking teams are shameless about their thievery hacking missions, and aren’t going to be deterred easily.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 Conti gang suffers security breach</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://therecord.media/conti-ransomware-gang-suffers-security-breach/">https://therecord.media/conti-ransomware-gang-suffers-security-breach/</a>
GIST	<p>The Conti ransomware group has suffered an embarrassing data breach after a security firm was able to identify the real IP address of one of its most sensitive servers and then gain console access to the affected system for more than a month.</p> <p>The exposed server, called a <b>payment portal</b> or <b>recovery site</b>, is where the Conti gang tells victims to visit in order to negotiate ransom payments.</p> <p>“Our team detected a vulnerability in the recovery servers that Conti uses, and leveraged that vulnerability to discover the real IP addresses of the hidden service hosting the group’s recovery website,” Swiss security firm Prodaft said in a <a href="#">37-page report</a> published on Thursday, identifying the server as hosted on <b>217.12.204.135</b>, an IP address owned by Ukrainian web hosting company ITL LLC.</p> <p><b>Prodaft exposes Conti IP address &amp; server password</b></p> <p>In addition, Prodaft said its researchers maintained access to the server for weeks, during which time they monitored network traffic for IP addresses that connected to the server.</p> <p>While some connections belonged to victims and their negotiators, Prodaft also monitored SSH connections, which most likely belong to the Conti gang itself.</p> <p>However, luck wasn’t on the researchers’ side, as all SSH IP addresses belonged to Tor exit nodes, meaning they couldn’t be used to identify Conti operators.</p> <p>Other pieces of valuable information shared in the Prodaft report also included details about the Conti server OS and its <b>htpasswd</b> file that contained a hashed version of the server password.</p> <p><b>IP exposure causes Conti to scramble for new host</b></p> <p>Once published, the report didn’t go unnoticed with the Conti gang, and especially the parts about the breach of its payment portal, the IP leak, and the sharing of their server’s hashed password—details that opened the gang to having its server hijacked by rival ransomware groups.</p> <p>In a conversation on Thursday night, hours after Prodaft’s findings went live, security researcher MalwareHunterTeam told <i>The Record</i> that the Conti gang had taken its payment portal offline.</p>



By Friday, the researcher said that the sudden downtime was preventing all recent Conti victims from negotiating and paying ransoms, extending those downtimes at companies around the world.

MalwareHunterTeam, who has been tracking ransomware gangs since the mid-2010s, described the sudden downtime as uncharacteristic for a ransomware group that generally had a more stable and professionally run infrastructure.

However, the Conti payment portal did eventually come back online Friday night, more than 24h after it was first taken down.

“Looks like Europeans have also decided to abandon their manners and go full-gansta simply trying to break our systems,” the Conti gang said in an insult-filled statement posted on their blog, effectively confirming Prodaft’s findings and their own security breach, in a message that was also meant to reassure its affiliates that their infrastructure was safe again.

Prodaft said that it shared all its findings with law enforcement “for further legal action against the Conti group and its affiliates.”

However, such findings are typically kept private as much as possible in order to give law enforcement time to take action against cybercrime groups, operations that usually take months.

After its report was published this week, Prodaft was criticized by several security researchers for sharing this sensitive information publicly, which eventually led to the Conti group fortifying its server security.

In fact, one of the reasons why the Conti gang intervened to move and secure its payment portal so quickly is also related to the fact it was hosted in Ukraine, a country that has recently collaborated with Europol and US agencies to arrest ransomware affiliates for the [Clop](#), [REvil](#), and [LockerGoga](#) gangs.

As a side note, the Conti gang also countered Prodaft’s claims that they’ve [earned \\$25.5 million from ransom payments since July 2021](#). Conti operators said that the real number was \$300 million, although this is most likely an empty boast, which ransomware gangs often use to promote themselves and the profitability of their attacks.

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HEADLINE	11/19 Ransomware so lucrative being repurposed
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.zdnet.com/article/ransomware-is-now-a-giant-black-hole-that-is-sucking-in-all-other-forms-of-cybercrime/">https://www.zdnet.com/article/ransomware-is-now-a-giant-black-hole-that-is-sucking-in-all-other-forms-of-cybercrime/</a>
GIST	<p>Ransomware is so lucrative for the gangs involved that other parts of the cybercrime ecosystem are being repurposed into a system for delivering potential victims.</p> <p>"The gravitational force of ransomware's black hole is pulling in other cyberthreats to form one massive, interconnected ransomware delivery system -- with significant implications for IT security," said security company Sophos <a href="#">in a report</a>.</p> <p>Ransomware is considered by many experts to be <a href="#">most pressing security risk facing businesses</a> -- and its extremely lucrative for the gangs involved, with <a href="#">ransom payouts increasing significantly</a>.</p> <p>Sophos said that ransomware is becoming more modular, with different groups specialising in particular elements of an attack. It also pointed to the linked rise of 'ransomware as-a-service', where criminal gangs are able to purchase access to tools to run their own ransomware attacks when they lack the technical ability to create those tools themselves.</p>

These so-called ransomware 'affiliates' don't even have to find their own potential victims: the ransomware ecosystem has developed so that they can go to other groups who specialise in gaining access to corporate networks and who will sell that backdoor on to them.

As well as doing business with these 'initial access brokers', would-be ransomware attackers can turn to botnet operators and malware delivery platforms to find and target potential victims. And because of the potential profit to be made, these groups are increasingly focusing on serving ransomware gangs rather than concentrating on less lucrative forms of online crime, Sophos said.

"Established cyberthreats will continue to adapt to distribute and deliver ransomware. These include loaders, droppers and other commodity malware; increasingly advanced, human-operated Initial Access Brokers; spam; and adware," said the security company.

The idea of ransomware-as-a-service has been around for a while, and has often been a way for lower-skilled or less well-funded attackers to get started.

But what has changed now, said Chester Wisniewski, principal research scientist at Sophos, is that ransomware developers are now using this as-a-service model to optimise their code and get biggest payouts, offloading to others the tasks of finding victims, installing and executing the malware, and laundering the cryptocurrencies.

Separate research has even suggested that ransomware gangs are now rich enough to [start buying their own zero-day flaws](#), something that was previously only available to state-backed hackers.

"This is distorting the cyberthreat landscape," Wisniewski said, as common threats such as loaders, droppers, and Initial Access Brokers -- which were around and causing disruption well before the ascendancy of ransomware -- are now servicing the demands of ransomware gangs.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/19 FDIC: banks 36hrs report security incident</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.scmagazine.com/news/breach/new-rule-says-banks-now-have-36-hours-to-report-a-security-incident-to-the-fdic">https://www.scmagazine.com/news/breach/new-rule-says-banks-now-have-36-hours-to-report-a-security-incident-to-the-fdic</a>
GIST	<p>Banks regulated by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation will have 36 hours to report a computer security incident to the FDIC, according to a <a href="#">joint final ruling</a> issued Thursday.</p> <p>The joint rule issued by the FDIC, the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, and the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) defines a computer security incident as something that results in actual harm to the confidentiality, integrity, or availability of an information system or the information that the system processes, stores, or transmits.</p> <p>Banks would need to notify the FDIC if a cyber incident disrupted or degraded the <a href="#">bank's</a> operations, activities and processes.</p> <p>"The final rule the FDIC has approved, along with the OCC and the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, addresses a gap in timely notification to the banking agencies of the most significant computer-security incidents affecting banking organizations, allowing the FDIC and our fellow banking supervisors to be better positioned to understand and to respond to cybersecurity threats across the banking sector," said FDIC Chairman Jelena McWilliams in a <a href="#">statement</a>.</p> <p>Service providers are also required to notify at least one bank-designated point of contact at each affected customer banking organization "as soon as possible" when the service provider determines that their customer has experienced a computer security incident that has materially disrupted or degraded a <a href="#">bank</a> for four or more hours.</p> <p>The final rule takes effect on April 1, 2022, with full compliance extended to May 1, 2022.</p>

HEADLINE	<b>11/19 Teen arrested; theft \$36M cryptocurrency</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.securityweek.com/canadian-teen-arrested-over-theft-36-million-cryptocurrency">https://www.securityweek.com/canadian-teen-arrested-over-theft-36-million-cryptocurrency</a>
GIST	<p>A Canadian teen has been arrested for their alleged role in the theft of roughly \$36.5 million (CAD\$46 million) worth of cryptocurrency from a single victim in the United States, according to the Hamilton Police in Ontario, Canada.</p> <p>The arrest was made following an investigation that started in March 2020 and in which the FBI and the United States Secret Service Electronic Crimes Task Force participated as well.</p> <p>SIM swapping was used to perform the cryptocurrency theft, authorities revealed. The technique involves manipulating employees at a wireless network services provider into transferring the victim's phone number to a SIM card in the attacker's possession.</p> <p>This allows the cybercriminals to intercept phone calls and SMS messages the victim might receive, including those that contain two-factor authorization codes.</p> <p>During the investigation, authorities discovered that some of the stolen funds were used to purchase an online username considered rare in the gaming community. Thus, they were able to uncover the account holder.</p> <p>Hamilton Police said the unnamed teen was arrested on charges related to the theft of more than \$5,000 and for "possession of property or proceeds of property obtained by crime."</p> <p>Authorities also said more than \$5.5 million (more than CAD\$7 million) in cryptocurrency was seized.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/19 Sky slow to fix bug in routers</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/sky-router-flaw-slow-fix/">https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/sky-router-flaw-slow-fix/</a>
GIST	<p>Entertainment company Sky took more than 17 months to fix a security flaw that impacted roughly six million routers belonging to its customers.</p> <p>The DNS rebinding vulnerability was <a href="#">discovered</a> in May 2020 by Raf Fini, a researcher at British cybersecurity company <a href="#">Pen Test Partners</a>.</p> <p>Six router models were affected by the flaw: Sky Hub 3, Sky Hub 3.5, Booster 3, Sky Hub, Sky Hub 4, and Booster 4.</p> <p>"It affected users with the default router's admin password (admin:sky), which was the case for a high percentage of routers," wrote Pen Test Partners in a <a href="#">blog post</a>.</p> <p>The flaw could have exposed a victim's home network to the internet, allowing a cyber-criminal to gain direct access to the victim's computers and devices.</p> <p>Pen Test Partners criticized Sky's snail-paced approach to fixing the vulnerability.</p> <p>"Sky did not prioritize fixing the issue, taking nearly 18 months to fully resolve it, failing to meet numerous deadlines they set themselves," said Pen Test Partners.</p> <p>They added: "Despite having a published vulnerability disclosure program, Sky's communications were particularly poor and had to be chased multiple times for responses."</p> <p>Pen Test Partners grew so frustrated with the entertainment company's apparent lack of action that it eventually reached out to the BBC on August 6 over the matter.</p>

	<p>“Only after we had involved a trusted journalist was the remediation program accelerated,” wrote Pen Test Partners.</p> <p>Sky said in an email on October 22 that 99% of the affected routers had been updated. The company has offered to replace affected routers free of charge for its customers.</p> <p>“After being alerted to the risk, we began work on finding a remedy for the problem and we can confirm that a fix has been delivered to all Sky-manufactured products,” <a href="#">said</a> Sky.</p> <p>Commenting on the news, Burak Agca, security engineer at <a href="#">Lookout</a> said: “This situation shows why there has never been a greater need for zero trust networking strategies to be implemented by companies.</p> <p>“Understanding whether a network connection has been compromised is critical for data in transit. Zero Trust Network Access (ZTNA) and Cloud Access Security Broker (CASB) services ensure that data and resources are only presented to registered and authenticated users, depending on the type of device and location, and the level of threat exposure.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>1121 SEC warns ongoing impersonation attacks</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/us-sec-warns-investors-of-ongoing-govt-impersonation-attacks/">https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/us-sec-warns-investors-of-ongoing-govt-impersonation-attacks/</a>
GIST	<p>The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has warned US investors of scammers impersonating SEC officials in government impersonator schemes via phone calls, voicemails, emails, and letters.</p> <p>The alert comes from SEC's Office of Investor Education and Advocacy (OIEA), which regularly issues warnings to inform investors about the latest developments in investment frauds and scams.</p> <p>"We are aware that several individuals recently received phone calls or voicemail messages that appeared to be from an SEC phone number," OIEA said.</p> <p>"The calls and messages raised purported concerns about unauthorized transactions or other suspicious activity in the recipients' checking or cryptocurrency accounts."</p> <p>Investors are advised not to provide personal info until they verify they're actually speaking with an SEC official since these phone calls and voicemails are "in no way connected to the SEC."</p> <p>To confirm the identity of someone behind unsolicited calls or messages claiming to be from the SEC, you can use the SEC's personnel locator at (202) 551-6000, or call (800) SEC-0330 or email <a href="mailto:help@SEC.gov">help@SEC.gov</a>.</p> <p>If you are on the receiving end of a scam attempt from someone trying to impersonate the SEC, you can also file a complaint with the SEC's Office of Inspector General at <a href="http://www.sec.gov/oig">www.sec.gov/oig</a> or call the OIG's toll-free hotline at (833) SEC-OIG1 (732-6441).</p> <p><i>Con artists have used the names of real SEC employees and email messages that falsely appear to be from the SEC to trick victims into sending the fraudster's money. Impersonation of US Government agencies and employees (as well as of legitimate financial services entities) is one common feature of advance fee solicitations and other fraudulent schemes. Even where the fraudsters do not request that funds be sent directly to them, they may use personal information they obtain to steal an individual's identity or misappropriate their financial assets. — SEC</i></p> <p>"The SEC does not seek money from any person or entity as a penalty or disgorgement for alleged wrongdoing outside of its formal Enforcement process," the SEC department added.</p>

	<p>"Be skeptical if you are contacted by someone claiming to be from the SEC and asking about your shareholdings, account numbers, PIN numbers, passwords, or other information that may be used to access your financial accounts."</p> <p>In July, the <a href="#">FBI's Criminal Investigative Division also warned investors</a> of fraudsters impersonating registered investment professionals such as brokers and investment advisers.</p> <p>The FBI alert followed a <a href="#">similar fraud alert issued by FINRA</a> the same week regarding broker imposter scams using <a href="#">phishing sites impersonating brokers</a> and doctored SEC or FINRA registration documents.</p> <p>Victims or those who have information on a broker imposter scheme can report possible securities fraud to the <a href="#">SEC</a> and online fraud to the <a href="#">FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center</a>.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 Vestas hit by cybersecurity incident</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/vestas-hit-by-cyber-security-incident-shuts-some-it-systems-2021-11-20/?web_view=true">https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/vestas-hit-by-cyber-security-incident-shuts-some-it-systems-2021-11-20/?web_view=true</a>
GIST	<p>Nov 20 (Reuters) - Vestas (<a href="#">VWS.CO</a>) has been hit by a cyber security incident and has shut down its IT systems across multiple business units and locations to contain the issue, the world's largest maker of wind turbines said on Saturday.</p> <p>The incident occurred on Nov. 19 and customers, employees and other stakeholders could be affected by the shutdown of company's systems, the Danish company said.</p> <p>The company did not provide details on the nature of the incident.</p> <p>"We are working together with our internal and external partners to contain the issue fully and recover our systems," Vestas said in a statement.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 App outage locks hundreds of Tesla cars</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/nov/20/tesla-app-outage-elon-musk-apologises">https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/nov/20/tesla-app-outage-elon-musk-apologises</a>
GIST	<p>Hundreds of <a href="#">Tesla</a> drivers were locked out of their cars at the start of the weekend after the manufacturer's mobile app suffered an outage – and dozens voiced their complaints on social media.</p> <p><a href="#">Elon Musk</a>, <a href="#">Tesla</a>'s chief executive, said on Friday that the company's mobile application was coming back online after the app server outage. Musk was responding to a Tesla owner's tweet, who said that he was experiencing a "500 server error" to connect his Model 3 through the iOS app in Seoul, South Korea.</p> <p>"Should be coming back online now. Looks like we may have accidentally increased verbosity of network traffic," Musk said.</p> <p>Advertisement</p> <p>The outage was first reported by specialist electric vehicle website Electrek, which started receiving reports from Tesla owners in the US and Canada, then from Europe and Asia.</p> <p>About 500 users reported they faced an error at about 4.40pm ET (9.40pm GMT), according to outage monitoring website Downdetector, which tracks outages by collating status reports from a series of sources, including user-submitted errors on its platform. There were just over 60 reports by about 9.20pm ET.</p> <p>"Apologies, we will take measures to ensure this doesn't happen again," Musk said on Twitter.</p>

	<p>According to Electek, Tesla's systems rarely have outages, though the website said that, in September 2020, the company had experienced a complete outage of both its customer-facing servers and internal system for several hours.</p> <p>Stuart Masson, editor of the Car Expert website, told the BBC that Tesla drivers were not entirely reliant on the app. "There will be a secondary mechanism to get in or out of the car beyond the app, the difficulty will come for drivers if they are not carrying it," he said.</p>
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<b>HEADLINE</b>	<b>11/20 Crypto's wild decimal frontier</b>
<b>SOURCE</b>	<a href="https://www.bloombergquint.com/onweb/coin-worth-0-00004893-highlights-crypto-s-wild-decimal-frontier">https://www.bloombergquint.com/onweb/coin-worth-0-00004893-highlights-crypto-s-wild-decimal-frontier</a>
<b>GIST</b>	<p>(Bloomberg) -- When it comes to decimal places, cryptocurrencies are treading into bizarre territory that other markets have never dared -- or bothered, really -- to go before. Shiba Inu cost just \$0.00004893 or so each on Friday afternoon, while Dogecoin fetched less than 1 cent early this year. A Bitcoin can be sliced into a satoshi, which is this much of the coin: 0.00000001. Then there's the weirdest of all: the wei. That's one quintillionth of an Ether, or 0.000000000000000001. The likely explanations for this are a mix of understandable and befuddling.</p> <p>Retail traders love penny stocks. It's easy to dream of huge returns when a move from 1 cent to 2 cents doubles your money. So going even smaller than that rides on some long-standing coattails, even if Shiba Inu and Dogecoin don't bring much else to the table. And who doesn't want to buy a million of something? With Shiba Inu, that only costs about \$50.</p> <p>"You see with a lot of these meme coins, such as Doge and Shiba, retail investors are plowing money into them because they look cheap," said Halsey Minor, executive chairman of Public Mint, a blockchain platform. "There's a psychological element here, in many cases, where people think, 'Oh, a whole Bitcoin is \$65,000, but one Dogecoin is only 25 cents.'"</p> <p>But the rationale for such tiny slivers of Bitcoin, Ether or Ether's cousins (smart contracts using the ERC20 standard that also live on the Ethereum blockchain) is harder to explain -- besides the fact that they're named for crypto pioneers. The satoshi's namesake is, of course, Bitcoin's creator, Satoshi Nakamoto. Wei refers to influential cryptographer Wei Dai.</p> <p>Why on earth would anyone need to divide a token up to 18 decimal places? Well, there are not many compelling reasons. Though, theoretically, a token could rise so much in value that all those decimal places could come in handy. In theory, at least.</p> <p>"Many researchers in the space have agreed that the 18-decimal standard for ERC20 tokens is pretty arbitrary and likely not ideal -- 18 decimals is a LOT of precision for pretty much any use case," said Arjun Bhuptani, the co-founder and project lead of Connex, which is what's known as an interoperability network that enables communication between Ethereum-compatible blockchains.</p> <p>The problem is, while numbers can go up infinitely or be divided infinitely small, computer hardware has finite limits on how much data can be stored. So some platforms and tokens have chosen to break away from the 18-decimal standard. For example, the stablecoin Tether -- known as USDT -- is an ERC20 token but only uses six decimals. Even that is a lot for a coin meant to be worth almost exactly \$1.</p> <p>"The tradeoff that token creators typically consider when doing this is whether the improvement in user experience outweighs the additional work that would need to happen for other projects and applications to integrate it," Bhuptani said.</p> <p>The result is what's known as decimal precision -- or how far to the right of the decimal point that various platforms are willing to go. For example, at Kraken, there are limits on how many numbers can be inputted when placing a trade. Given its high price, the exchange has done away with pennies when it comes to buying Bitcoin -- orders can only be placed in dime increments. And when it comes to placing an order for a certain amount of a token, forget about at 18-decimal standard for Ethereum-based tokens: you only get</p>



8 on Kraken and many other platforms.

As Kraken explains on its website: "A lower price precision can help order books operate more efficiently by reducing the volume of canceled (unfilled) orders as traders continually jump in front of each other by small fractions in price."

When it comes to coins like Shiba Inu, Dogecoin and SafeMoon -- which currently goes for about \$0.00000348 -- it's usually a preposterously large number to the left of the decimal when it comes to supply that helps create the preposterously small number to the right when it comes to price. Shiba Inu started with a supply of 1 quadrillion. In other words: 1,000,000,000,000,000.

While half of that was gifted to Ethereum co-founder Vitalik Buterin, who "burned" most of it by sending it off to a wallet no one can access, that still left about 500 trillion of the coins.

So, in the highly unlikely event the coin were to rise in value to \$1, the amount circulating would be worth almost 10 times as much as the entire U.S. stock market. Retail traders probably aren't thinking through how unlikely that is, said Jonathan Azeroual, vice president of blockchain asset strategy at crypto exchange platform INX.

"Decimalization on Dogecoin and on Shiba was actually the best marketing thing you could ever do, basically, because nobody wants to buy 0.01 Bitcoin, but everybody wants to have millions of Shiba," said Azeroual. "Why? Because they think somehow, one day, maybe that thing will go to \$1."

That psychological effect is why some in the crypto community advocate for quoting prices for satoshis, rather than a full Bitcoin. For what it's worth, when Bitcoin is \$65,000, a satoshi is \$0.00065 -- more than 10 times the cost of a Shiba Inu.

INX also only allows eight decimals for subdivisions of a coin. Even that's a lot. Starting at the sixth place, you're already dealing with a fraction of Ether that's worth less than a penny and deep into territory known as "dust" -- slivers of tokens so tiny they can get stranded in wallets because they're not valuable enough to cover transaction costs.

Of course, the crypto world is famous for making plausible what once seemed implausible and vice versa. Azeroual recalls the cautionary tales of years past when people blew massive amounts of Bitcoin or Ethereum as payments just because they could. Like the guy who spent 10,000 Bitcoins --current value, almost \$600 million -- for two pizzas in 2010. These days, at some shops, you could get something like 10,000 pizzas for one Bitcoin. "And that's what the exchanges are dealing with, at the end of the day, what the price will be 10 years from now," he said. "Who knows? Right?"

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HEADLINE	11/21 El Salvador plans first 'Bitcoin city'
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/markets/rates-bonds/el-salvador-plans-first-bitcoin-city-backed-by-bitcoin-bonds-2021-11-21/">https://www.reuters.com/markets/rates-bonds/el-salvador-plans-first-bitcoin-city-backed-by-bitcoin-bonds-2021-11-21/</a>
GIST	<p>MIZATA, El Salvador, Nov 20 (Reuters) - El Salvador plans to build the world's first "Bitcoin City", funded initially by bitcoin-backed bonds, President Nayib Bukele said on Saturday, doubling down on his bet to harness the crypto currency to fuel investment in the Central American country.</p> <p>Speaking at an event closing a week-long promotion of bitcoin in El Salvador, Bukele said the city planned in the eastern region of La Union would get geothermal power from a volcano and not levy any taxes except for value added tax (VAT).</p> <p>"Invest here and make all the money you want," Bukele said in English, dressed all in white and wearing a reversed baseball cap, in the beach resort of Mizata. "This is a fully ecological city that works and is energized by a volcano."</p>



Half of the VAT levied would be used to fund the bonds issued to build the city, and the other half would pay for services such as garbage collection, Bukele said, estimating the public infrastructure would cost around 300,000 bitcoins.

El Salvador in September became the first country in the world to adopt bitcoin as [legal tender](#).

Although Bukele is a popular president, opinion polls show Salvadorans are skeptical about his love of bitcoin, and its bumpy introduction has fueled protests against the government.

Likening his plan to cities founded by Alexander the Great, Bukele said Bitcoin City would be circular, with an airport, residential and commercial areas, and feature a central plaza designed to look like a bitcoin symbol from the air.

"If you want bitcoin to spread over the world, we should build some Alexandrias," said Bukele, a tech savvy 40-year-old who in September proclaimed himself "dictator" of El Salvador on Twitter in an apparent joke.

El Salvador planned to issue the initial bonds in 2022, Bukele said, suggesting it would be in 60 days time.

Samson Mow, chief strategy officer of blockchain technology provider Blockstream, told the gathering the first 10-year issue, known as the "volcano bond", would be worth \$1 billion, backed by bitcoin and carrying a coupon of 6.5%. Half of the sum would go to buying bitcoin on the market, he said. Other bonds would follow.

After a five year lock-up, El Salvador would start selling some of the bitcoin used to fund the bond to give investors an "additional coupon", Mow said, positing that the value of the crypto currency would continue to rise robustly.

"This is going to make El Salvador the financial center of the world," he said.

The bond would be issued on the "liquid network", a bitcoin sidechain network. To facilitate the process, El Salvador's government is working on a securities law, and the first license to operate an exchange would go to Bitfinex, Mow said.

Crypto exchange Bitfinex was listed as the book runner for the bond on a presentation behind Mow.

Once 10 such bonds were issued, \$5 billion in bitcoin would be taken off the market for several years, Mow said. "And if you get 10 more countries to do these bonds, that's half of bitcoin's market cap right there."

The "game theory" on the bonds gave first issuer El Salvador an advantage, Mow argued, saying: "If bitcoin at the five-year mark reaches \$1 million, which I think it will, they will sell bitcoin in two quarters and recoup that \$500 million."

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HEADLINE	11/21 Iran Mahan Air hit by cyberattack
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/business-middle-east-iran-tehran-c8f5886948c6af4e965bbf59a951f7e9">https://apnews.com/article/business-middle-east-iran-tehran-c8f5886948c6af4e965bbf59a951f7e9</a>
GIST	<p>TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — A cyberattack on Sunday disrupted access to Iran's privately owned Mahan Air, state TV reported, marking the latest in a series of cyberattacks on Iranian infrastructure that has put the country on edge.</p> <p>Mahan Air's website displayed an error message saying the site couldn't be reached. The carrier said in a statement that it had "thwarted" the attack and that its flight schedule was not affected, adding it has faced similar breaches in the past.</p>

	<p>Many customers of Mahan Air across Iran received strange text messages on Sunday. A group calling itself Hoosyarane-Vatan, or Observants of Fatherland, claimed in the mass texts to have carried out the attack, citing the airline's cooperation with Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard. The self-described hacking group did not provide any evidence.</p> <p>Mahan Air flies from Tehran to a few dozen destinations in Asia, Europe and the Middle East. The United States Treasury Department, which polices compliance with sanctions, blacklisted the airline in 2011 for allegedly "providing financial, material and technological support" to the Revolutionary Guard's elite Quds Force, responsible for the Islamic Republic's campaigns abroad. The Treasury accused Mahan Air of ferrying weapons, goods and personnel to Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group.</p> <p>Major cyberattacks have struck various Iranian systems in recent months, with <a href="#">one in October crippling gas stations across the country</a>, leaving angry motorists stranded in long lines unable to use their government-issued cards to buy subsidized fuel. Without naming a specific country, President Ebrahim Raisi blamed the hack on anti-Iranian forces seeking to sow disorder and disruption.</p> <p>Another <a href="#">attack targeted the railroad system</a>, causing mass confusion with scores of trains delayed and canceled across Iran.</p>
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## Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	11/21 Afghanistan's ISIS-K stronghold
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.rtvonline.com/english/international/7585/Inside-Afghanistans-ISIS-K-stronghold-Its-a-no-go-zone-even-for-Taliban">https://www.rtvonline.com/english/international/7585/Inside-Afghanistans-ISIS-K-stronghold-Its-a-no-go-zone-even-for-Taliban</a>
GIST	<p>From the outset, the Chaparhar district of Afghanistan's eastern Nangarhar province seems like nothing out of the ordinary: markets teeming with livestock and fresh fruits, children hawking sugarcane and trinkets, weathered faces peddling rusty bicycles and jammed into brightly-colored rickshaws.</p> <p>But venture a little deeper, where there is little sign of the white Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan flag flapping in the wind, and therein lies a sense of the unknown, that anything can happen at any time. After all, it has long been the territorial and operational bastion for Afghanistan's ISIS affiliate known as ISIS-K, or colloquially as Daesh.</p> <p>"There has been more than twenty dead bodies here since the Taliban came," one villager tells me from outside the gas station. "Just two days ago, a person was shot dead – we don't know by who."</p> <p>Down a nearby dirt track – where men dig into the earth, and covered women roam with babies in their arms – villagers claim that the number of slaughtered is actually more than forty-five. Several vow that almost every day a man is "taken out of his house and killed."</p> <p>Another group of Chaparhar locals solemnly divulge that two days before our visit a "body was found near their house."</p> <p>It is impossible to know for sure as the Taliban has gone above and beyond to downplay the looming threat. One Jalalabad-based Nangarhar official mandates point-blank that I "must not do any stories on Daesh or ask questions," resulting in something of a local media blackout.</p> <p>But late last year, the now-defunct Afghan government detained ISIS-K's recruitment head Tasal Aziz, who was listed as a Chaparhar resident.</p> <p>With a population of around 55,000, the district has long been the base for the militant organization to convene and construct brutal attacks nationwide. These have risen to a steady state of almost daily, ever since the August 15 Taliban takeover.</p>

Villagers in hushed tones spell out that there is a cemetery near the bustling Ghurfa Bazaar (market) which long marked the start of the ISIS-K bastion, but that the Taliban have brought in more reinforcements and managed to repel ISIS-K back a couple of villages into Chaparhar.

“ISIS has been there since the beginning, since 2015,” says Samiullah, a house guard who is around 23. “But the Taliban is only there during the day, at night, they gather at a base and don’t go out. Even the previous government soldiers would only go in the day. So this area has always been theirs.”

That graveyard is marked by decayed Afghan flags striped green, red and black representing the old Ashraf Ghani-led government. Alongside them are remnants of the signature Taliban flag and then a splattering of plain black. The nearby Ghurfa market is thick with a clear Taliban presence, its district headquarters still a pockmarked vision of the nation’s old flag.

“ISIS are there, a few ISIS,” the Chaparhar District Governor, whose name is Ainudin but is “famous by Badrudin,” reluctantly admits. “They might be hidden somewhere, but the Taliban has taken over, and we are fully in control.”

But the further you drive along the narrow Chaparhar Road away from Jalalabad city, the quieter and more sinister it becomes. The Taliban checkpoints disappear, as there is next to no traffic. Some stores are decorated with a plain black cloth, and others show the black flag printed with the white Shahada, making it impossible to know if it is just a coincidence, or meant to signify the U.S. designated militant faction. Some point out that years ago, before the ISIS-K rise, Arabs and Chechens started drifting into homes, and it was made clear that the Taliban – then an insurgency – “did not have permission to enter.”

“ISIS acts as an insurgency, they stay off the main road, but if they have a specific target in mind, they come out from their houses and target that person,” one driver explains. “That is how they operate.” I see just two teen-looking, plain-clothed fighters’ disappearing into the caramel-colored mounds on the lookout and wielding an AK-47. Pools of sunshine stream down across the lush landscape of rolling hills and primordial dwellings.

There is a sense that nobody knows who anybody is – and if they do, they don’t want to say. Locals attest that they have not identified “who is Talib and who is Daesh,” given that they typically dress and look the same in their Afghan attire.

Most of the men on the street refuse to utter the label Daesh out loud.

“People might have personal problems with each other, sometimes they target each other,” a farmer named Mohammad, 45, surmises.

Hekmatullah, a baker, swears that the Emirate “has control day and night,” and general store owner Haji Khan, 48, cautiously concurs that “nothing is here.”

Outside one black cloth-adorned general store, a young employee whispers into the phone asking whether the “people coming” were in a car. I remember back to a little earlier in the day at the market when a small boy peered through the window at the camera nestled on my photographer’s lap and raced off to tell an adult observing nearby – who immediately pulled out a flip-phone.

Regardless of the situation, it’s not a place to linger too long.

Since ISIS-K’s inception into Afghanistan in 2015 – as the outfit gained momentum in its flagship of Iraq and Syria – loyalists have swarmed into the otherwise quiet, picturesque rural parcel. It is from its bulwark of Chaparhar that ISIS-K for years has plotted, planned and dispatched its cadre of assailants – from suicide bombers and shooters to those who ambush security checkpoints and plant bombs – to take the lives of hundreds, if not thousands.

Much of the uptick of offenses has occurred since scores of ISIS-K operatives escaped during the chaotic transition period, with many former security forces abandoning their positions ahead of the Taliban encroachment. But since then, the Taliban themselves have also enabled prison releases.

Badrudin concedes that around 50 ISIS have been apprehend in Chaparhar alone and that 14 were sent to the provincial intelligence department.

“The other people agreed not to fight back, so we released some of them,” he said.

ISIS-K – sometimes termed the Khorasan group in historical reference to the greater Iranian region meaning “the Eastern Province” in Persian – first surfaced in the Afghan war theater almost seven years ago. Most of its recruits are believed to have defected from the Taliban branches in Afghanistan and neighboring Pakistan, seeking an even more extreme interpretation of Islam with more international rather than domestic-centered goals of “caliphate” control.

While precise numbers of ISIS fighters are impossible to verify, U.S. intelligence believes that figures hover around the two thousand mark – and could now be much more. It’s a far cry from 2019 when the former Afghan government claimed that the terrorist affiliate had been defeated. But by mid-2020, attacks claimed by the outfit sparked again, triggering alarm from the international community.

Running afoul to the official Taliban position that ISIS is a “small problem” or simply doesn’t exist at all, some Kabul-based, Taliban intel heads quietly consider the district “one hundred percent” ISIS-K domineered – and essentially a no-go zone for their foot soldiers.

“It is the barbaric duties they do – decapitating, removing eyes and things. That activity only gets them stronger,” Samiullah adds. “That is how much fear the Talibs have of ISIS.”

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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 US warns Russia group: not interfere in Mali</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.military.com/daily-news/2021/11/21/top-us-diplomat-warns-russian-group-not-interfere-mali.html">https://www.military.com/daily-news/2021/11/21/top-us-diplomat-warns-russian-group-not-interfere-mali.html</a>
GIST	<p>DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Saturday warned a shadowy Russian company with connections to the Kremlin not to interfere in efforts aimed at restoring democracy in the West African nation of Mali.</p> <p>As he wrapped up a weeklong, three-nation tour of Africa that was dominated by crises across the continent, Blinken said it would be “unfortunate” if the Wagner Group became active in Mali, where there are internationally backed plans to have a democratically elected government in place by April.</p> <p>Mali “remains a linchpin for future stability in the Sahel and we have deep concerns about that stability and deep concerns about the extremism and terrorism that is spreading tentacles in the region,” Blinken said at news conference with Senegal's foreign minister, Aissata Tall Sall. West Africa’s Sahel region is the vast area south of the Sahara Desert where extremist groups are fighting for control.</p> <p>“It would be especially unfortunate if outside actors engage in making things even more difficult and more complicated,” he said. Blinken said he was speaking particularly of the Wagner Group, which has deployed mercenaries to Syria, the Central African Republic and Libya, drawing protests from the West and others.</p> <p>The Wagner Group, owned by a confidant of Russian President Vladimir Putin, has been accused by Western governments and U.N. experts of human rights abuses in the Central African Republic and involvement in the conflict in Libya.</p> <p>France and Germany have objected to the presence of Wagner mercenaries in Mali, and the European Union said this past week that it would consider sanctions against anyone interfering in Mali's democratic transition.</p>

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said the company has a “legitimate” right to be in Mali because it was invited by the transitional government, and he has insisted the Russian government is not involved.

Blinken, who has also been pressing while in Africa for an end to crises in Ethiopia and Sudan, said the United States was ready to restore aid to Mali that was suspended after a military coup.

“This is ultimately about the people of Mali and their aspirations for peace, their aspirations for development and respect for human rights,” he said. “We look forward to taking the next steps to resume the full array of assistance as soon as the democratically elected government has taken office.”

Mali has struggled to contain an Islamic extremist insurgency since 2012. Extremist rebels were forced from power in Mali’s northern cities with the help of a French-led military operation, but they regrouped in the desert and began launching attacks on the Malian army and its allies.

In June, Col. Assimi Goita was sworn in as president of a transitional government after carrying out his second coup in nine months. Mali faces increasing international isolation over the junta’s power grab. Elections are due to be held in February, but the EU fears they will be delayed.

In Dakar, Blinken was pushing American-built infrastructure projects, including an initiative to produce COVID-19 vaccines in Senegal, a first for Africa. He also promoted sustainable development, women’s empowerment and other human rights initiatives to bolster faltering democracies.

In meetings with female entrepreneurs and executives from U.S.-based multinational companies, Blinken extolled the benefits of boosting women’s roles in economies and of buying American. In a jab at China, with which the U.S. competes for lucrative business, he noted that America invests “without saddling the country with a debt that it cannot handle.”

“The effects are going to be felt inside of Senegal, improving infrastructure, creating jobs and reinforcing public safety and climate resilience,” he said as he witnessed the signing of four road, traffic management and other deals between Senegal and U.S. firms worth about \$1 billion.

The investment, he said, shows “our shared values of democracy, transparency and rule of law as well as innovation.”

In less than two weeks Senegal will host a major China-Africa trade and investment forum, underscoring Beijing’s interest in increasing the scope of its influence on the continent. U.S.-China competition in Africa has been a major underlying theme of Blinken’s trip, although he has tried to downplay it.

“Our purpose is not to make our partners choose, it is to give them choices,” he said. “And when people have choices, they usually make the right one.”

Tall Sall, the foreign minister who will play a major role in the forum, thanked Blinken for his comments.

“We have a diplomacy of sovereignty from which we do not exclude anyone,” she said. “There is not only one choice. We have many choices.”

As he does in France and other French-speaking countries, Blinken spoke extensively in French at his public appearances, including with Senegal’s president, Macky Sall, and at an event at Dakar’s Institute Pasteur, which hopes to begin producing COVID-19 vaccines with American help next year.

In his meetings, Blinken addressed security issues, particularly a rise in jihadi violence across the Sahel and increasing authoritarianism that many believe is fueling extremism.

	<p>Senegal is a key partner in the fight against extremism and last year it hosted the U.S. military's annual counterterrorism exercise, Flintlock.</p> <p>One area where Sall may seek U.S. help is with increased security measures along the country's borders with Mali and Mauritania, where several counterterrorism operations have taken place in recent years.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 Referrals to UK 'Prevent' falls due to Covid</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/number-of-referrals-to-u-k-s-counter-radicalization-program-falls-due-to-covid-19/">https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/counterterrorism/number-of-referrals-to-u-k-s-counter-radicalization-program-falls-due-to-covid-19/</a>
GIST	<p>The Covid-19 pandemic has caused the number of referrals into the U.K.'s counter radicalization program Prevent to fall to their lowest level for five years – at a time when extremist grooming presents a growing risk to children.</p> <p>Counter Terrorism Policing is therefore calling on parents, friends, family and young people to “ACT Early” and report any concerns.</p> <p>According to new <a href="#">Prevent statistics</a> published by the Home Office, the number of people being supported through the government's anti-radicalization program fell to 4,915 in the year ending March 31 2021 – a drop of 22% compared to the previous year. This is largely due to school and college closures caused by the Covid-19 lockdowns, with the proportion of referrals received from the Education sector (25%) having fallen to its lowest level since 2016.</p> <p>Despite this, young people under the age of 20 continue to make up around half (48%) of Prevent casework, with these new statistics showing that the proportion of young people adopted for Channel counter radicalization intervention has increased year-on-year. The largest increase was seen in those aged 15-20 – which made up 38% of Channel cases in 20/21, up from 33% the previous year.</p> <p>Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) has warned for months that the closure of schools, and restriction of support services like social care and mental health provision during the lockdown period could lead to fewer people receiving support from Prevent, which places protection around people vulnerable to radicalization and aims to stop them from being drawn into terrorism.</p> <p>CTP's National Coordinator for Prevent, Detective Superintendent Vicky Washington, believes this trend is likely to continue:</p> <p>“At CTP we have long warned that a ‘perfect storm’ of factors would potentially lead more young people to engage with extremist content online, and potentially follow a path towards terrorism”, she said.</p> <p>“The increase in extremist material online, and Covid-19 leading to vulnerable people spending more time isolated and online, and with fewer protective factors around them, meant that we were always concerned that people who needed our help would not be receiving it.</p> <p>“Unfortunately that prediction appears to have been proven correct, with child arrests for terrorism offenses reaching an all-time high at the same time as numbers of young people being protected against radicalization by the Prevent program fell to their lowest since comparable data began.</p> <p>“We can stop young people from following a path towards terrorism before it is too late, but we are once again calling for parents, friends and family to learn more about the signs and dangers of radicalization. They are the people most likely to spot when their child is being groomed by extremists and act early enough to stop it.”</p> <p>The low level of referrals from parents, friends and family led CTP to launch <a href="#">ACT Early</a> one year ago – which is a dedicated safeguarding website and advice line which provides guidance and support. It has already achieved early success in driving referrals from friends and family, and this month CTP is also</p>

	launching new videos, assets and activities aimed directly at young people in order to help drive more awareness of the ACT Early campaign.
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	<a href="#">Read more at Counter Terrorism Policing</a>

HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Role civilian employees in the caliphate</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/terrorism-study/without-us-there-would-be-no-islamic-state-the-role-of-civilian-employees-in-the-caliphate/">https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/terrorism-study/without-us-there-would-be-no-islamic-state-the-role-of-civilian-employees-in-the-caliphate/</a>
GIST	<p>Between 2014-2019, the Islamic State undertook an ambitious governance project in Iraq and Syria that attempted to replicate and mimic the functions, institutions, and structure of contemporary nation-states. At its peak, the Islamic State's state comprised an area of approximately 90,000 square kilometers (an area equivalent to the size of Portugal) and the group governed the lives of eight million civilians residing in its territory. The experiences of civilians living in Islamic State-controlled territory varied widely. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi and Syrian civilians fled the Islamic State's territory as soon as they could, many of those civilians who remained engaged in diverse forms of everyday resistance against their Islamic State occupiers, while an unknown number of civilians were the victims of the group's systematic mass killings, rape, and torture policies.</p> <p>However, this article focuses on a group of persons who have received little attention but played a key role in the development of the Islamic State: local civilian employees of the group. These Iraqi and Syrian civilians were employed by one of the Islamic State's federal or provincial governing institutions for a specific role and in return received a salary, as well as frequently other financial and material bonuses. However, the Islamic State's civilian employees did not necessarily pledge allegiance to the group nor did they necessarily become members. But taken as a whole, civilian employees were fundamental to the operation of the Islamic State's state; they formed the majority of employees that staffed the vast number of governing institutions that the Islamic State created during the first years of its rule.</p> <p>It is safe to assume there are many thousands of surviving former civilian employees of the Islamic State. They represent a potentially significant challenge. Many civilian employees presumably remain in their communities and represent a potential workforce for any future iterations of the Islamic State. However, significant numbers have also been detained in Syria and Iraq, with little transitional justice or reintegration processes in place. According to Human Rights Watch, Iraqi civilian employees affiliated with the Islamic State have been "subject to prosecution for their role in aiding or providing support to a terrorist organization." Courts in northeast Syria run under the auspices of the Syrian Democratic Forces and the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria have distinguished between civilian and armed membership of the Islamic State. Sentences for civilian employees are one to two years of imprisonment instead of five to 10 years. However, up until 2021, only 8,000 Syrians had been prosecuted in these courts. It is estimated that it would take at least another 13 years to prosecute the Syrians who are in detention in these camps, without even considering the Iraqis or other foreign persons currently detained in northeast Syria.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	<a href="#">Read more at the CTC Sentinel</a>

HEADLINE	<b>11/20 Sentenced 16yrs: material support terrorism</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/federal-pages/doj/n-y-man-sentenced-to-more-than-16-years-in-prison-for-trying-to-join-isis-or-al-nusra/">https://www.hstoday.us/federal-pages/doj/n-y-man-sentenced-to-more-than-16-years-in-prison-for-trying-to-join-isis-or-al-nusra/</a>
GIST	<p>A New York man was sentenced today to 200 months, more than 16 years, in prison for attempting to provide material support and resources to the designated foreign terrorist organizations the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) and the al-Nusrah Front.</p> <p>Elvis Redzepagic, 30, of Commack, pleaded guilty in April 2021. According to court documents, in early 2015, Redzepagic began communicating with an individual he believed to be both the commander of a battalion in Syria and a member of ISIS or the al-Nusrah Front, and made attempts to join that individual's battalion to engage in violent jihad. In July 2015, Redzepagic traveled to Turkey and made multiple</p>



	<p>unsuccessful attempts to cross the border into Syria. Unable to enter Syria from Turkey, Redzepagic traveled to Jordan in August 2016, but was stopped and deported by Jordanian authorities.</p> <p>In Facebook messages from October 2015, Redzepagic explained that “jihad” is when “you fight for the sake of God” and “die for the sake of Allah.” Redzepagic stated that he traveled to Turkey to “perform Jihad and join Jabhat Al-Nusra.” He predicted, “there will come a time where people will only know to say Allahu Akbar.” In subsequent interviews with law enforcement, Redzepagic admitted that at the time he attempted to enter Syria, he was prepared to strap a bomb to himself.</p> <p>A search of the defendant’s laptop yielded a variety of ISIS-specific extremist propaganda, including ISIS nasheeds, or Islamist hymns, including the “ISIS Anthem” in English. Redzepagic also repeatedly accessed the website “Put hilafeta,” or “Way to the Caliphate,” a Bosnian-language website for prospective foreign fighters from the Balkans who primarily sought to join ISIS and wage jihad in Syria.</p>
<a href="#">Return to Top</a>	<a href="#">Read more at the Justice Department</a>

HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Afghan refugees could take years get to US</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/afghan-refugees-us-military-visa-11637450916?mod=hp_lead_pos10">https://www.wsj.com/articles/afghan-refugees-us-military-visa-11637450916?mod=hp_lead_pos10</a>
GIST	<p>Thousands of Afghans who were evacuated from Kabul after the Taliban <a href="#">seized power in August</a> could be stranded in other countries for years because of backlogs in the U.S. refugee system, according to officials and the groups that helped them escape.</p> <p>From interpreters to policewomen to judges, many say they were promised—in recruitment pitches for the military and other venues—a chance to come to the U.S. in return for promoting American goals during the 20-year war. Instead, many could wait years to continue their journeys while relying on host governments <a href="#">and private charities</a> to meet their needs until then.</p> <p>“We don’t know about the process, when we will go, how long we will stay here; people are concerned,” said Arsala, an Afghan aid worker who is now in Uganda with his wife and three children. He asked to be identified by one name only for security reasons. “We are well-deserving people. I worked with the U.S. government for about 10 years.”</p> <p>As the U.S. ramped up evacuation efforts from Kabul in August, American overseas military bases <a href="#">quickly became overcrowded</a> as some 70,000 Afghans entered the pipeline to U.S. military installations either abroad or in the U.S.</p> <p>To ease crowding, the Biden administration called on other countries to let Afghans travel through their nations while waiting for visas. Secretary of State Antony Blinken issued instructions in August to consular posts to reassure foreign partners considering hosting some of the Afghans that the U.S. would appreciate their efforts. An internal cable viewed by The Wall Street Journal offered talking points and a template letter to be delivered to those nations.</p> <p>“We are grateful for all efforts to assist in the safe passage of at-risk individuals attempting to leave Afghanistan, including those from the private sector,” the cable dated Aug. 24 said.</p> <p>Many governments across Africa, Europe and South America agreed to open their doors on a temporary basis to Afghans evacuated by private groups, such as those composed of veterans or nonprofit organizations. Those groups conducted their evacuations separate from the U.S. military, but in consultation with the State Department.</p> <p>Most of the Afghans evacuated by the U.S. military have been transferred to domestic bases. It is unclear how long the Afghans in other countries will wait for their chance to come to America, if they are eligible, because of limited opportunities for immigration and resettlement in the U.S. for those without immediate family members who are U.S. citizens or residents.</p>

One option is to apply to the Special Immigrant Visa program, set up for Afghans who worked directly for the U.S. government for at least a year and face Taliban retaliation. But there already were an estimated 100,000 applicants and immediate family members for those visas in the system before the fall of Kabul.

This past summer, the State Department had just succeeded in trimming average SIV processing times from several years to nine months. Since then, thousands more have applied.

“We are working diligently to process the enormous surge in new applications this year,” a State Department spokesman said. “We cannot determine how many of these new applicants have the employment experience with the U.S. government necessary to qualify for SIVs until they are further along in the process.”

For those who don’t qualify for the SIV program, they can apply to enter the U.S. as refugees—a system that was also already under stress after the Trump administration slashed the refugee intake to record lows and some embassies had to stop processing applications because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to the National Immigration Forum, a nonprofit that supports legislation to liberalize immigration, the refugee process in the U.S. can take more than two years. There is also a backlog of about 1.4 million refugee asylum requests, according to Syracuse University, which tracks the immigration process.

The State Department last month closed its 24-hour task force that was set up to deal with the Afghan crisis and to establish a permanent team to work on issues relating to evacuees and those seeking help leaving Afghanistan. It also named Elizabeth Jones, a former career foreign-service officer who once served in Kabul, as the coordinator for Afghanistan relocation efforts.

“There’s so much demand pent up, they may be living in some of these places for an extended period of time,” a senior State Department official said, in a reference to the evacuees.

The groups involved in evacuation efforts are calling on the Biden administration to find a way to fast-track the processing of these Afghans.

One of the largest groups of evacuees outside of the U.S. military system is spread across Albania, Georgia and North Macedonia. They were brought there by the U.S.-government-funded National Endowment for Democracy, a foundation that aims to support the spread of democratic ideas.

NED President Damon Wilson said his organization evacuated some 600 people to those nations. He is pressing the State Department to send mobile teams to screen and vet the Afghans in southeastern Europe so they can be moved to U.S. military bases overseas.

The State Department declined to comment on the progress of those discussions.

Beyond Europe, about 50 Afghans are living in Uganda, where they are waiting for visas after Sayara International, a global development firm that has worked closely with the U.S. on aid projects in Afghanistan, used its local African network to charter an evacuation flight to Kampala.

In South America, Afghan evacuees landed in Chile with the help of Marina LeGree, who runs Ascend, a small nonprofit that helps women gain confidence by teaching them to climb mountains.

“Our embassies in these places have an ongoing conversation with host governments about supporting Afghans and what is needed to support these communities because they cannot enter the United States except through the refugee admissions process,” the senior State Department official said.

Arsala, the Afghan evacuee now in Uganda, has filled out paperwork for a SIV in July and has been given a case number, but no guidance on the wait times. His wife is due to give birth to their third child any day, and he worries about his children’s schooling.

	“My hope and desire is that my wife delivers the baby in the U.S.,” Arsala said in a telephone interview. “It looks like it will be on Ugandan soil.”
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HEADLINE	<b>11/22 Kurds ‘reconciliation’ scheme: pay to leave</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/22/former-is-fighters-say-they-paid-way-out-of-kurdish-jail-in-reconciliation-scheme">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/22/former-is-fighters-say-they-paid-way-out-of-kurdish-jail-in-reconciliation-scheme</a>
GIST	<p>Kurdish-led forces in charge of jails in north-east Syria housing about 10,000 men with alleged links to <a href="#">Islamic State</a> are releasing prisoners in exchange for money under a “reconciliation” scheme, according to interviews with two freed men and official documents.</p> <p>Syrian men imprisoned without trial can pay an \$8,000 (£6,000) fine to be freed, a copy of the release form shows.</p> <p>As part of the deal, the released prisoners sign a declaration promising not to rejoin any armed organisations and to leave the parts of north and east Syria under control of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).</p> <p>On their release, the two men the Guardian met – both of whom had fought with IS until the group’s so-called caliphate collapsed in March 2019 – were reunited with their wives and children, who were also freed from al-Hawl detention camp under the deal.</p> <p>The families then travelled to Idlib province, which is run by rival Islamists, and crossed the border to Turkey. Both men are now living, they believe, under the radar of the authorities in the country they have made their new home. One says that he never bought into the IS ideology, and the other that he was initially attracted to the religious component but did not realise the group would grow to be so violent.</p> <p>It is not known how many men have been able to buy their freedom in this manner, but the two released men estimated at least 10 people they knew from their time in Hasekeh prison had left in the same way since the reconciliation scheme was implemented in 2019.</p> <p>About 8,000 Syrian and Iraqi men accused of being IS members, and 2,000 more foreigners who have not been repatriated by their home countries, are held in three overcrowded SDF-administered prisons in north-east Syria.</p> <p>The SDF has pushed its western partners to set up an internationally recognised court system to ease the pressure on its prisons and sometimes agrees reconciliation deals with tribal leaders who vouch that the prisoners are not extremists and will return to their families.</p> <p>An SDF spokesperson, Farhad Shami, denied that the document obtained by the Guardian, which the released men said they had signed, was official and said no such practice was taking place.</p> <p>“SDF has previously freed some prisoners who had links with IS [through tribal reconciliation], however their hands were not stained by blood of innocent civilians and [they] didn’t do any crimes. They were either employees in IS-run offices or were forced to join IS,” he said.</p> <p>“Those who have been freed are being monitored by security forces to make sure they don’t try to rejoin IS.”</p> <p>The international anti-IS coalition said it could not comment. “The coalition does not control or operate detention facilities or IDP camps. These detention facilities and IDP camps are both operated only by the SDF in north-east Syria,” it said in an email.</p>

The releases pose a significant security risk inside and outside Syria and raise the prospect that men who committed grave crimes will not face true justice.

Abu Jafar, who was released in March, was a security officer in IS-held Raqqa, where he worked for a branch notorious for punishing and executing local people who did not follow the group's austere interpretation of Islam.

In addition to the \$8,000 fine, Abu Jafar, who denies ever hurting anyone, paid another \$22,000 in bribes to various SDF officials, money he raised by asking his wealthy family in nearby Tabqa to sell some of their properties. He claimed to have joined IS just to make money, but continues to refer to the group by its full name in Arabic, rather than the more commonly used derogatory term Daesh.

"You can choose to be in IS of your own free will, but leaving isn't something you can control. The moment you leave, they consider you as kafir [unbeliever] and you have to die," he said.

"I was arrested in Baghuz [IS's last stronghold] after being injured in an airstrike and turning myself in with other fighters during a ceasefire in March 2019. They moved our families to the [detention] camps and moved us to the jail. For around two years, we were waiting for a court or something to clarify our destinies. After a point, we knew we had to find our own way to get out of that place."

Abu Muhammad, from Deir ez-Zor, led a fighting unit in the battle against the SDF for the town of Kobani in 2014. He survived five years on the frontline, until he was also arrested in Baghuz in 2019, and released along with his family in January this year.

He described conditions in Hasekeh jail that amounted to torture and ill treatment, which the SDF has previously denied.

He said: "SDF guards used to hang us to the roof of investigations rooms to torture us, and leave us hungry and thirsty. They did the same thing that we did to the people we arrested when we were in charge as IS leaders. I really regret that now, but I can't describe myself as a victim after everything I did.

"The releasing process wasn't easy, but after contacting many SDF leaders my family was able to get me out of jail after paying \$14,000 in bribes in addition to the official \$8,000 to the SDF's public finance department."

The details the two men gave about how they left prison corresponds with a release document for a different man the Guardian was able to obtain from an SDF source. Both men said they had signed the same form.

It has become common knowledge in places such as Raqqa that local men with links to IS whose families can raise the funds are able to get their sons out of prison, but the development has been greeted with anger and anxiety from most of the city's residents, who suffered some of the group's worst atrocities.

"As Raqqa people, we believe that releasing those dangerous people is just a matter of money. The SDF doesn't care about the crimes those people committed against us. It's just a way for the SDF to gain more money," said Mohab Nasser, a civil society activist.

Four years since IS was driven from Raqqa by the SDF and US air power, much of the city still lies in ruins and residents are beginning to lose hope that IS will ever face true justice.

Mahmoud, 24, lost his mother during the IS occupation. The militants executed her in a makeshift prison after accusing her of spying, and her body never returned to the family.

Seeing the people he blames for his mother's death return to the city has frustrated him to the point he is now considering dealing with the problem himself.

	<p>“They accused my mother of being a spy for the coalition, but she didn’t even know how to use a mobile phone. Today we know who [the released IS members] are. Sometimes we see them in Raqqa’s streets, but without a real judicial system, we cannot prove that. One day, we will take our revenge into our own hands.”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Middle-class Afghans slide into poverty</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/jobs-lost-middle-class-afghans-slide-poverty-hunger-81323262">https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/jobs-lost-middle-class-afghans-slide-poverty-hunger-81323262</a>
GIST	<p>KABUL, Afghanistan -- Not long ago, Ferishta Salihi and her family had enough for a decent life. Her husband was working and earned a good salary. She could send several of her daughters to private schools.</p> <p>But now, after her husband lost his job following the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, she was lined up with hundreds of other Afghans, registering with the U.N.’s World Food Program to receive <a href="#">food</a> and cash that her family desperately needs just for survival.</p> <p>“We have lost everything. We’ve lost our minds,” Salihi said after her registration was complete. With her was her eldest daughter, 17-year-old Fatima, whom she had to take out of school. She can’t afford to pay the fees at a private school, and the Taliban so far are not allowing teenage girls to go to public schools.</p> <p>“I don’t want anything for myself, I just want my children to get an education,” Salihi said.</p> <p>In a matter of months as Afghanistan’s economy craters, many stable, middle-class families like Salihi’s have plummeted into desperation, uncertain of how they will pay for their next meal. That is one reason the United Nations is raising alarm over a hunger crisis, with 22% of the population of 38 million already near famine and another 36% facing acute food insecurity - mainly because people can’t afford food.</p> <p>The economy was already in trouble under the previous, U.S.-backed government, which often could not pay its employees. The situation was worsened by the coronavirus pandemic and by a punishing drought that drove up food prices. Already in 2020, nearly half of Afghanistan’s population was living in poverty.</p> <p>Then the world’s shutdown of funding to Afghanistan after the Taliban’s Aug. 15 seizure of power pulled the rug out from under the country’s small middle class. International funding once paid for much of the government budget — and without it, the Taliban have largely been unable to pay salaries or provide public services. The international community has not recognized Taliban rule, demanding the militants form a more inclusive government and respect human rights.</p> <p>International aid also fueled projects around the country that provided jobs, most of which are now on hold. The country’s banks are cut off from the international banking system, further snarling the private sector. The country’s economy is estimated to have contracted 40% in just three months.</p> <p>Hospitals are seeing increasing numbers of emaciated, malnourished children, mostly from the country’s poorest families who were already barely getting by.</p> <p>Now families that have seen their once-stable livelihoods wrecked also find themselves with nothing and must scrape for ways to cover costs of food, rent and medical expenses.</p> <p>Salihi’s husband once made around 24,000 Afghanis (\$264) a month working in the logistics department at the World Bank’s office in Kabul. But after the Taliban took power, the World Bank halted its projects. The 39-year-old Salihi said her husband was told not to come to the office and he hasn’t received his salary since.</p> <p>Now she is the family’s only source of income. One of her neighbors has a business selling nuts, so they give her bags of nuts to shell at home and she then sells the shells to people who use them to burn for fuel.</p>

Her husband, she said, spends his day walking around the district looking for work. “All he can do is measure the streets with his steps,” she said, using an expression for someone with nothing to do.

The U.S. and other international donors are funneling money to Afghanistan for humanitarian aid through U.N. agencies, which ensure the money doesn’t go into the coffers of the Taliban government. The main focus has been on two tracks. The U.N. Development Program, World Health Organization and UNICEF are working to directly pay salaries to doctors and nurses around the country to keep the health sector from collapsing. The WFP, meanwhile, is providing direct cash aid and food to families, trying to keep them above water.

The WFP has had to ramp up its program dramatically. In 2020, it provided aid to 9 million people, up from the year before. So far this year, that number has risen to nearly 14 million, and the rate has risen sharply each month since August. Next year, the agency aims to provide for more than 23 million people, and it says it needs \$220 million a month to do so.

It’s not just the poorest of the poor, usually based in rural areas, who need help. “There’s a new urban class of people who up until the summer would have been drawing a salary ... and now are facing hunger for the first time,” said Shelley Thakral, the WFP spokesperson for Afghanistan.

“People are now having to scavenge for food, they’re skipping meals and mothers are forced to reduce portions of food,” she said.

Last week, hundreds of men and women lined up in a gymnasium in a west Kabul neighborhood to receive a cash distribution - 3,500 afghanis a month, about \$38.

Nouria Sarvari, a 45-year widow who was waiting in line, used to work at the Higher Education Ministry. After the Taliban came to power, they told most women government employees to stay home. Sarvari said she hasn’t received a salary since and she’s struggling to keep food on the table for her three children still living with her.

Her 14-year-old son, Sajjad, sells plastic bags in the market for a little cash. Sarvari says she depends on help from neighbors. “I buy from shopkeepers on credit. I owe so many shopkeepers, and most of what I receive today will just go to paying what I owe.”

Samim Hassanzwai said his life has been overturned completely over the past year. His father and mother both died of COVID-19, he said. His father was an officer in the intelligence agency and his mother was a translator for an American agency.

Hassanzwai, 29, had been working in the Culture Ministry but hasn’t gotten a salary since the Taliban came to power. Now he’s jobless with his wife and three children as well as his four younger sisters all dependent on him.

“I had a job, my mother had a job, my father had his duties. We were doing fine with money,” he said. “Now everything is finished.”

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HEADLINE	11/21 Afghanistan opium business cranks up
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/afghanistans-opium-business-cranks-up-as-the-taliban-look-the-other-way-11637491200?mod=hp_lead_pos7">https://www.wsj.com/articles/afghanistans-opium-business-cranks-up-as-the-taliban-look-the-other-way-11637491200?mod=hp_lead_pos7</a>
GIST	<p>TALUKAN, Afghanistan—Afghanistan’s opium industry—the main source of heroin sold in the West—is revving back up.</p> <p>Here in Talukan, dozens of merchants openly trade different grades of opium in a busy new market that has sprung up since the Taliban’s Aug. 15 victory. Plastic bags filled with viscous brown liquid are on</p>

display next to metal bowls filled with a jellylike substance as well as solid dark bricks of the narcotic. White banners praising the Taliban's Islamic Emirate fly from every shop.

In this and other districts of southern Afghanistan's Kandahar province, the Taliban movement's cradle, farmers say they are starting to plant poppies on land where they used to grow wheat or corn because a combination of drought, international sanctions and border closures has made legal crops unprofitable.

"Everyone is poor here, and will become even poorer if we don't grow poppies. There is no alternative: Our other produce simply has no market," said Salih Mohammad, a 55-year-old father of seven. He said he increased the land under poppy cultivation from 2.5 to 4 acres, or half of his leasehold, this month: "There is no doubt that people here will grow more poppies this year than in the past."

In late August, shortly after overthrowing the U.S.-backed Afghan republic, the Taliban promised that they would eradicate the country's multibillion-dollar drug industry, which accounts for 85% of world-wide opium production. Three months later, as the poppy planting season begins, the opposite is happening.

Taliban authorities in Kabul say they remain serious about countering the country's drug business. Qari Saeed Khosty, spokesman for the Interior Ministry, which oversees antidrug efforts, said Thursday that the Taliban government's aim is to prevent "the growth and trade of narcotics."

In the provinces, different attitudes prevail. When a Taliban intelligence official arrived at the Talukan opium market on Wednesday, his only interest was in demanding that visiting foreign journalists leave.

The Taliban governor of Panjwai district, where Talukan is located and where remnants of American bases dot the landscape, argued that Afghanistan, squeezed by U.S. financial sanctions and the worst drought in decades, can't afford to deprive local farmers of their livelihoods.

"How can we tell them to stop? Who will take care of them?" said the governor, Mullah Seif Alrahman Akhund. "If the international community recognizes our government and we receive aid and development assistance, then poppies will definitely disappear. We can take measures against it, but we don't want our people to suffer from even deeper impoverishment."

The U.S. froze more than \$9 billion in Afghan central-bank assets after the Taliban takeover and imposed financial sanctions that crippled the country's banking system. No government has recognized the Taliban's Islamic Emirate. And while the U.S., other Western nations and the Taliban continue diplomatic contacts, these have led to few practical results.

Meanwhile, the United Nations estimates that Afghanistan's economy has contracted by about 40% since August, and warns that many parts of the country could experience famine this winter.

Kandahar's Mirwais regional hospital, the main medical center in southern Afghanistan, is dealing with a rapid increase in child malnutrition cases, many of them severe, according to Dr. Saleh Mohammad, its Taliban-appointed director. "It's going to be a huge humanitarian crisis," he said.

Less than an hour's driving away, farmer Salih Mohammad, no relation, set about sowing his first opium crop since the Taliban takeover. He took off his black turban, crouched and started smashing a mound of dry poppy pods with a dusty brick. Using a sieve, he separated out the beige-colored seeds, mashed them into wet soil, and carried the mixture in the fold of his robe. Then, with large strides, he threw handfuls of that mixture into what used to be a wheat field.

A motorcycle with two Taliban gunmen drove by on a dirt road, paying no attention. The Taliban administration, with its empty coffers, was in no position to intervene, Mr. Mohammad observed. "When the government is poorer than the population, the two won't have time or energy to bother each other. Anyone will do whatever they want to do," he said.



Nearby Pakistan, he pointed out, has repeatedly closed its border in recent months, with truckloads of Kandahar pomegranates and other export crops rotting at the crossing: “Our fruits and vegetables become useless when the border is shut.”

Back in 2001, before the U.S. invasion, Afghanistan’s Taliban regime managed to significantly curb opium production, with land under poppy cultivation brought to a tiny fraction of current levels, according to U.N. data. Fears that the Taliban would return to such a policy as they court international recognition caused raw opium prices to surge in late August. The prices have since fallen by about half.

Compared with wheat and other legal crops, poppies require little water. The opium gum can be harvested in as little as five months, and can be stored for years with no need for refrigeration. An acre can yield some 110 pounds of opium, farmers in Kandahar province say, with the current farm-gate price between \$20 and \$30 a pound, depending on quality.

“Nothing is profitable to grow here except opium,” said farmer Noor Ahmad, a 30-year-old father of six, who said he would have planted poppies on all of his land if he could afford fertilizers.

Middlemen buy the raw opium from farmers like Mr. Mohammad and Mr. Ahmad in the villages and take it to regional markets, such as the one in Talukan. There, wholesalers purchase the stock for heroin labs, mostly in neighboring Helmand province. Refined narcotics are then smuggled via Pakistan, Iran and Central Asia to lucrative markets in Europe and beyond.

“All the profits go to the foreign countries. Afghans are just supplying the labor,” said one of the opium merchants in Talukan, Hajji Abdul Wali Agha, as he sipped tea by a white wall smudged with hundreds of brown opium streaks.

During the 20-year American presence in Afghanistan, the Taliban used the drug business to fund their insurgency. The U.S., after initially backing eradication efforts that pushed more villagers to embrace the Taliban, later focused on an ultimately unsuccessful effort to promote alternative crops like saffron or pomegranates. Last year, the area under poppy cultivation in Afghanistan surged 37% to 554,000 acres, according to estimates by the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime.

The government of President Ashraf Ghani, ousted in August, formally opposed the drug trade. The opium merchants who now operate in the open in Talukan say they conducted their business dispersed in the Kandahar province’s villages, behind closed doors. Instead of actually trying to eliminate the narcotics trade, however, the former government’s police commanders were mostly interested in extracting protection money, these drug dealers say. The Taliban, they add, don’t interfere with their business—at least for now.

“If the Taliban gain recognition, I am sure they can eliminate poppies within a month,” said Juma Gul, another opium merchant in Talukan.

Farmer Rohullah Alkozai, a 40-year-old father of 13, wasn’t so sure. Because of the drought, he is only able to water half his land. The family barely ekes out an existence.

“We don’t like to grow poppies. We know it’s a harmful substance. We dislike it the most,” he said, taking a small break from shoveling sun-baked earth to prepare it for poppy planting, his shalwar kameez stained by sweat. “But we have no other options. If someone comes to me and tells me to stop cultivating poppies, I will reply: ‘What shall I eat then?’”

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HEADLINE	11/20 Thousands of Afghans waiting resettlement
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/thousands-of-afghans-evacuated-during-us-withdrawal-awaiting-resettlement/2021/11/20/8226ecca-4260-11ec-a88e-2aa4632af69b_story.html">https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/thousands-of-afghans-evacuated-during-us-withdrawal-awaiting-resettlement/2021/11/20/8226ecca-4260-11ec-a88e-2aa4632af69b_story.html</a>

HOLLOMAN AIR FORCE BASE, N.M. — The U.S. government calls the 50-acre sprawl of tents on this desert Air Force base a “village.” The 4,300 Afghans temporarily housed here are the government’s “guests.” And the landscape of tents and trailers is called Aman Omid, which in Persian means “peace and hope” — the feelings U.S. officials say they are trying to foster here.

More than two months after the United States’ chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan, the federal government is still in the process of resettling roughly 45,000 Afghans housed in temporary camps on U.S. military bases after they were airlifted from their home country.

Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico is among eight facilities that became hubs for one of the largest humanitarian resettlement operations in U.S. history. Biden administration officials say about 73,000 Afghans have arrived in the United States since the fall of Kabul to the Taliban. Holloman received 7,100, half of them children, between late August and early October. They include Afghans who risked their lives to aid the U.S. government during its two-decade war effort in their country, officials say. Others are relatives of those who served or of U.S. citizens, as well as many others who felt at risk in Taliban-held Afghanistan.

“We are this generation’s Ellis Island,” Curtis Velasquez, the Air Force colonel who serves as the village “governor,” told reporters on a recent tour of the base. Reporters were shown an adult English class in progress, an impromptu cricket game and a cavernous dining hall that serves halal meals labeled in English, Dari and Pashto.

“We take pride in what we are doing here for our Afghan guests,” Velasquez said. He described the camp as “a safe haven where they can transition from that survival mode to a thriving mode.”

But the long-term fates of many Afghan evacuees are uncertain. While officials say all of the Afghans have been heavily vetted, most will start new lives in the United States as short-term [“humanitarian parolees,”](#) without an immediate path to permanent residency or the full host of benefits and services offered to refugees. To stay in the United States permanently, many — including those who served the U.S. mission — will need to navigate a severely backlogged visa and immigration system.

More ominous, Afghans and their advocates say, are the fates of the tens of thousands of others who were left behind.

### **'The U.S. has a legal and moral obligation to take action'**

As the name Aman Omid suggests, the official rhetoric at Holloman’s camp for evacuated Afghans centers on optimism, resilience and success.

The Afghans here are heroic and ambitious, say the military commanders and officials who run the camp, many of whom are themselves veterans of the war in Afghanistan.

“These Afghan guests have sacrificed much for America. I’d actually say that the majority of those in the village have risked more for American security than the vast majority of Americans have,” said Daniel E. Gabrielli, the Air Force brigadier general who heads operations at Aman Omid.

Less often acknowledged are the circumstances that brought them here: that America’s once-vanquished enemy, the Taliban, took control of the country as swiftly as the United States removed its last troops, and that American-affiliated Afghans were left acutely vulnerable and feeling betrayed. Officials also avoid dwelling on the fact that the Afghans housed here are the lucky ones — those who made it onto evacuation flights, amid panicked crowds, barricades and violence at Kabul International Airport. When Afghans ask what can be done to rescue the spouses, parents and children who didn’t make it onto a plane, the American officials at Holloman say they have struggled to provide helpful answers.

The U.S. State Department says its priority now is to facilitate the resettlement of those Afghans who are here and to assist any U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents still in Afghanistan.

The Biden administration has asked Congress to pass the Afghan Adjustment Act, a bill that would allow those paroled into the country to apply for green cards after a year, making it easier for them to become permanent residents and bring relatives left behind.

A State Department official said the government was working to evacuate some of those left behind, including parents and children separated at the airport, by “both chartering its own flights as well as working with airlines to reserve a certain number of seats on already existing flights.” The official, who declined to confirm the effort on the record, did not say how Afghans who fear persecution from the Taliban might access a Taliban-controlled airport. But the official pointed to Qatar as the administration’s new formal go-between, per a memorandum signed by Secretary of State Antony Blinken earlier this month.

“I’ve not met one person who does not have family back there,” said Gabrielli.

“When the guests want to talk about their family back home, I encourage Airmen here to take the time to listen,” he added later in an email. “I will take unlimited time to hear their stories, and feel it builds trust and is cathartic for them as well.”

Those left behind include Rahatullah Doust’s wife and children. The 29-year-old former employee of the United Nations Development Program said his family tried to get into the Kabul [airport](#) multiple times, amid a frantic, surging crowd and Taliban sentries who beat people back, before deciding it was too dangerous to try again with a toddler and an infant.

“My daughter is very small — she wasn’t even 1 year old — and I didn’t want to lose her. So I decided that, okay, I’ll go alone,” said Doust, who is now alone at Holloman. It is unclear how or when he’ll be able to bring his family to the United States. “I miss them,” he said, his eyes welling.

A 21-year-old at the camp, who gave her name only as Bibi, described her family’s own battle to reach an evacuation flight. Her father, a prominent Afghan businessman, didn’t make it.

“The Taliban was hitting everybody and they were attacking us. They hit my brother, my mom, my aunt,” she said. “My dad got separated in the airport.” He’s now in hiding “because the Taliban are searching for him,” she added.

### **'Daily desperate pleas for help'**

In Washington, the Biden administration has walked a fine line in its attempts to persuade Americans to welcome tens of thousands of Afghans into their communities — emphasizing their valor and hard work — while also seeking to defend or deflect attention from the many thousands it did not evacuate.

Advocates for Afghans, including attorneys and veterans groups, estimate that there are potentially tens of thousands still in Afghanistan who are at risk because of their or their relatives’ affiliation with the U.S. occupation, and they want the Biden administration to do more.

“The U.S. military and diplomatic presence in Afghanistan may have ended in August but the U.S. government’s obligation did not,” Sunil Varghese, policy director for the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), told reporters on a recent call, in which advocates lamented the Biden administration’s inaction.

“The U.S. has a legal and moral obligation to take action, and vulnerable Afghans cannot afford to wait longer,” Varghese said.

Rick Burns, who founded a nonprofit to assist Afghans and Iraqis and remains in touch with many, said, “We are receiving daily desperate pleas for help.”

“It is heart-wrenching and it is terribly difficult to have these conversations with people who you feel very personal relationships with and yet are in such horrible danger and such desperate situations in Afghanistan,” said Burns, a veteran of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

At Holloman’s Aman Omid Village, officials avoid offering predictions on how quickly the Afghan families here will be able to leave and start over with apartments in new cities and short-term assistance from local resettlement agencies.

A couple of thousand have already left. But the task force is authorized to run through March, meaning some of the thousands waiting for resettlement might still be here six months after their arrival — a product, officials and advocates say, of a national resettlement system that was largely dismantled by former president Donald Trump and still is not fully equipped.

In-demand resettlement destinations such as California, Virginia and Texas — where there are already large [Afghan diaspora](#) communities — are “saturated,” officials say; the resettlement groups simply can’t accommodate the numbers of Afghans who want to go there.

A screen mounted to the wall in the tent where State Department officials help Afghans navigate their resettlement cases advertises in a rotating slide show less-conventional options — places like Birmingham, Ala., and Chattanooga, Tenn. — that might be able to take them sooner.

In the meantime, camp infrastructure is steadily evolving to ease the long wait. The camp now has WiFi towers and indoor heating. The generators will soon be replaced with standard electricity.

There are communal TVs that play international cricket matches and Bollywood movies; English and cultural orientation classes; toys and art supplies for the children; and abundant dispensers of hot tea. This month, the residents received winter coats and long underwear to prepare them for the months ahead. All of the adults are now vaccinated against the [coronavirus](#), officials say.

As airmen move through the camp each day, children flock to them: to hang on their arms like a jungle gym, toss them soccer balls and try out newly acquired English phrases.

Some of the adults have noted that, with its cloudless blue sky, humming generators and horizon of arid mountains, the pale, gravelly landscape of Aman Omid’s tents and trailers bears a resemblance to Bagram Airfield — the former headquarters of U.S. military operations in Afghanistan. It was a base where many U.S. service members, diplomats and Afghans alike once worked, but has since been abandoned to the Taliban.

Gabrielli told reporters during the tour that being able to serve Afghans who helped the United States is deeply fulfilling for many of his airmen, particularly those who served, who may find “closure” in their participation here.

Asked whether there is much discussion of America’s Afghanistan legacy among airmen and others at the camp, Gabrielli said in an email that it has “personally been a humbling experience for me” to hear from Afghans about the military units they served with, as well as “listening to their stories and looking at the photos of them with American Generals and other leaders.”

He added: “I also encourage Airmen to keep in mind that while guests are happy and grateful for the opportunity to have a safe, new place to make their home, many are still grieving over the circumstances that brought them here.”

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HEADLINE	11/19 FBI became CIA agents in secret prisons
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/19/us/politics/quantanamo-torture-fbi-cia.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/19/us/politics/quantanamo-torture-fbi-cia.html</a>
GIST	GUANTÁNAMO BAY, Cuba — In the torturous history of the U.S. government’s black sites, the F.B.I. has long been portrayed as acting with a strong moral compass. Its agents, disgusted with the violence they

saw at a secret C.I.A. prison in Thailand, walked out, enabling the bureau to later deploy “clean teams” untainted by torture to interrogate the five men accused of conspiring in the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

But new information that emerged this week in the Sept. 11 case undermines that F.B.I. narrative. The two intelligence agencies secretly arranged for nine F.B.I. agents to temporarily become C.I.A. operatives in the overseas prison network where the spy agency used torture to interrogate its prisoners.

The once-secret program came to light in pretrial proceedings in the death penalty case. The proceedings are currently examining whether the accused mastermind of the Sept. 11 plot, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, and his four co-defendants voluntarily confessed after years in the black site network, where detainees were waterboarded, beaten, deprived of sleep and isolated to train them to comply with their captors’ wishes.

At issue is whether the military judge will exclude from the eventual trial the testimony of F.B.I. agents who questioned the defendants in 2007 at Guantánamo and also forbid the use of reports that the agents wrote about each man’s account of his role in the hijacking conspiracy.

A veteran Guantánamo prosecutor, Jeffrey D. Groharing, has called the F.B.I. interrogations “the most critical evidence in this case.” Defense lawyers argue that the interrogations were tainted by the years of torture by U.S. government agents.

In open court on Thursday, another prosecutor, Clayton G. Trivett Jr., confirmed the unusual arrangement, in which nine F.B.I. agents were “formally detailed” to the agency “and thus became a member of the C.I.A. and worked within C.I.A. channels.”

He said that the agents served as “debriefers,” a C.I.A. term for interrogators, and questioned black site prisoners “out of the coercive environment” and after the use of “E.I.T.s.”

E.I.T.s, or enhanced interrogation techniques, is a C.I.A. euphemism for a series of abusive tactics that the agency used against Mr. Mohammed and other prisoners in 2002 and 2003 — tactics that were then approved but are now illegal. They include waterboarding, painful shackling and isolating a prisoner nude, shivering and in the dark to break his will to resist interrogation.

Mr. Trivett offered no precise time period but made clear that the F.B.I. agents were absorbed by the C.I.A. sometime between 2002, when the black sites were established, and September 2006. On their return to the F.B.I., they took on the status of C.I.A. assets, he said, and so their identities are classified.

Five of the nine agents had roles in the interrogations of some of the defendants in the case, Mr. Trivett said, and their names have been provided to defense lawyers on the basis that they not be disclosed.

The F.B.I. declined to comment on the arrangement, as did the C.I.A.

A defense lawyer, James G. Connell III, added more details in the same court hearing.

He said that the nine agents “stopped being F.B.I. agents and became C.I.A. agents temporarily” under a memorandum of understanding that established a different arrangement than the more typical assignment of a representative of one law enforcement agency to work out of the organization of another.

A former C.I.A. historian, Nicholas Dujmovic, said there was a precedent for “taking employees from another government agency and quickly making them C.I.A. employees for specific functions.”

In the 1950s, the C.I.A. transformed U.S. Air Force pilots into C.I.A. employees during their stints flying U-2 spy planes and then returned them to the Air Force without the loss of seniority or benefits. “President Eisenhower thought it was important that U-2s not be piloted by U.S. military pilots,” Dr. Dujmovic said. The process was called “sheep dipping,” he said.

Earlier testimony showed the F.B.I. participating remotely in the C.I.A. interrogations through requests sent by cables to the black sites seeking certain information from specific detainees, including Mr. Mohammed after he was waterboarded 183 times to force him to talk.

The pretrial hearings are in their ninth year and the military judge, Col. Matthew N. McCall of the Air Force, is the fourth judge to hear testimony at Guantánamo. In arguing over potential trial evidence, the prisoners' lawyers have repeatedly accused prosecutors of redacting information that the defense needs to prepare for the capital trial. In the military commissions, prosecutors are the gatekeepers of potential trial evidence and can withhold information they deem not relevant to the defense's needs.

In one example, Mr. Connell showed the judge a November 2005 cable the F.B.I. sent to the C.I.A. that contained questions for three of the defendants while they were in a black site — out of reach of the courts, lawyers and the International Red Cross.

The F.B.I. released the cable to the public this month under an executive order by President Biden to declassify information about the F.B.I. investigation of the Sept. 11 attacks.

Mr. Connell had earlier received a version of the same cable from prosecutors. But it was so redacted that it obscured the fact that the F.B.I. wanted Mr. Mohammed and the other defendants questioned in the black sites.

Mr. Trivett sought to play down the disclosure of the F.B.I.-C.I.A. collaboration as routine business at a time when the U.S. government was devoting tremendous resources to investigating the Sept. 11 attacks. "This is not some big bombshell," he told the judge.

A lawyer for Mr. Mohammed, Denny LeBoeuf, cast the collaboration as part of a conspiracy to portray F.B.I. accounts of interrogations of the defendants at Guantánamo in 2007 as "clean team statements," a law enforcement expression.

"They were never clean," Ms. LeBoeuf said. "Torture isn't clean. It is filthy. It has sights and sounds and consequences."

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## Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	11/21 China tennis star in video call
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/china/tennis-peng-shuai-appears-china-tennis-event-organiser-photos-show-2021-11-21/">https://www.reuters.com/world/china/tennis-peng-shuai-appears-china-tennis-event-organiser-photos-show-2021-11-21/</a>
GIST	<p>BEIJING, Nov 21 (Reuters) - Chinese tennis star Peng Shuai had a video call on Sunday with the president of the International Olympic Committee and told him she was safe and well, the IOC said in a statement.</p> <p>Photos and videos of Peng at a tournament in Beijing earlier on Sunday had done little to dampen international concerns, following a nearly three-week public absence after she alleged that a former senior Chinese official sexually assaulted her.</p> <p>In a statement, the IOC said that at the start of the 30-minute call with its president Thomas Bach, Peng had thanked the IOC for its concern about her well-being.</p> <p>"She explained that she is safe and well, living at her home in Beijing, but would like to have her privacy respected at this time," the IOC's statement said.</p> <p>"That is why she prefers to spend her time with friends and family right now. Nevertheless, she will continue to be involved in tennis, the sport she loves so much."</p>



France's foreign minister had earlier called on the Chinese authorities to provide more reassurance, echoing a statement by the Women's Tennis Association that the images were "insufficient" proof.

"I'm expecting only one thing: that she speaks," France's Jean-Yves Le Drian told LCI television, adding that there could be unspecified diplomatic consequences if China did not clear up the situation. The United States and Britain had also called for China to provide proof of Peng's whereabouts.

Current and former tennis players, from [Naomi Osaka](#) to [Serena Williams](#) to [Billie Jean King](#), had joined the calls seeking to confirm she was safe, using the social media hashtag #WhereIsPengShuai?

The concern over Peng came as global rights groups and others have called for a boycott of the Winter Olympics in Beijing in February over China's human rights record.

On Nov. 2, Peng posted on Chinese social media that former Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli had sexually assaulted her several years ago.

Neither Zhang nor the Chinese government have commented on her allegation. Peng's social media post was quickly deleted and the topic has been blocked from discussion on China's heavily censored internet.

Hu Xijin, editor-in-chief of the state-backed Global Times, posted a [25-second video](#) on Twitter on Sunday that showed her smiling, waving and autographing giant tennis balls for children at the Fila Kids Junior Tennis Challenger Finals tournament. The Global Times is published by the People's Daily, the official newspaper of China's ruling Communist Party.

The tennis event's official WeChat page shows photos of her at the tournament. Peng, 35, was the world No.1 doubles player in 2014, the first Chinese player to achieve a top ranking, after winning the doubles titles at Wimbledon in 2013 and the French Open in 2014.

On Saturday night, Peng visited a popular restaurant in downtown Beijing, according to a [video posted by Hu](#) that a restaurant manager confirmed to Reuters on Sunday.

Seven people including Peng were at the Sichuanese restaurant, said the manager, Zhou Hongmei, adding that they ate in a private room and were joined by the restaurant's owner.

"It was crowded at the restaurant as usual," Zhou said, showing a bill that included noodles and bamboo shoots. "They didn't have much. I think they mostly chatted."

The Women's Tennis Association (WTA), which has threatened to pull tournaments out of China, said the photos and video were "insufficient" and did not address the WTA's concerns, a spokesperson for the group told Reuters by email.

The International Tennis Federation (ITF) said it would continue to seek confirmation from Peng that she was safe.

Chinese state media outlet CGTN on Wednesday released what it said was an [email](#) Peng had sent to the WTA's chairman denying her was sexually assaulted.

Chairman Steve Simon said he had a hard time believing that Peng herself had written the email.

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HEADLINE	11/21 Raise prices without raising prices
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-companies-raise-prices-without-raising-prices-11637490602?mod=hp_lead_pos8">https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-companies-raise-prices-without-raising-prices-11637490602?mod=hp_lead_pos8</a>
GIST	The demand curve imposes its tyranny on every business. Raise prices and sales will begin to falter. Cut prices and customers will flock to you. It's usually either higher sales or higher profit.



The holy grail of pricing strategy is in finding ways to circumvent this seemingly ironclad economic law, to raise prices without losing sales. That becomes even more crucial at times like now, when input costs are increasing quickly, and raising prices is necessary just to keep the business running.

But we live in a time when customers have sharp eyes and loud voices. When a company raises prices directly, some vigilant customer is bound to notice and complain on social media, no matter how small the increase or valid the reason. A few complaints could then spiral into a firestorm of outrage, upturning even the most carefully orchestrated price increase.

The solution for many companies is to raise prices, but covertly. Companies hope that by making price increases hard to evaluate, they can then escape notice and avoid a customer backlash.

Here are common ways companies raise prices covertly.

### **1. Unbundling services, lowering product quality and devaluing reward programs**

My favorite pricing aphorism is, “Raise prices but keep them the same.” It sounds like a Zen koan, and it holds the key to a successful price increase. Consider this telling statistic from a recent Wall Street Journal [article](#) on airline prices: The average domestic airline ticket price is about the same today as 25 years ago, \$260, versus \$284 in 1996. And that’s *before* adjusting for inflation. How is it possible that the airline industry hasn’t increased ticket prices in over two decades?

It isn’t, really. Most of us are paying a lot more to fly today, thanks to a combination of three covert price increases. First, airlines have unbundled services so that fliers pay extra for checking luggage, boarding early, selecting a seat, having a meal and so on. The charges for these services don’t show up on the ticket price, but they are substantial. Second, the airplane seat’s quality, as measured by its pitch, width, seat material and heft, has declined considerably, meaning customers are getting far less value for the ticket price. And third, many airlines have steadily eroded the value of frequent-flier miles, increasing costs for today’s heavy fliers relative to those in 1996.

These practices are also common in other industries, whether it’s resort fees in hotels, cheaper raw materials in garments and appliances, or more-stringent restaurant and credit-card rewards programs.

### **2. Shrinkflation and the quantity surcharge**

Most people are familiar with shrinkflation—the common practice in the grocery industry of reducing weight, quantity or volume of a package while maintaining price. It works effectively as a covert price increase, because consumers are far more likely to notice price increases than equivalent weight or quantity decreases.

Less well known is a little psychological trick companies use with larger packages. Many shoppers assume that such packages with labels like “Party Size” or “Jumbo” will be cheaper on a per-unit basis. This is often not the case. Brands routinely exploit this common consumer belief by marking up larger packages *more*, and earning a greater margin on them. Researchers call this a “[quantity surcharge](#).”

At the same time, in many categories like cola and cookies, [smaller packages](#) still often cost a lot more per unit than standard-size packages, just as consumers expect.

The critical insight is that every product in a brand’s lineup has different markups and margins that aren’t always intuitive to customers. To raise prices covertly, the brand or the grocery store sells more of the higher-margin items by increasing their availability and visibility in the store, or withdrawing popular lower-margin items from circulation for a period. The prices don’t change, but customers pay more.

### **3. Disappearing deals and coupons**

Incentives such as coupons, “buy one, get one” offers and free shipping are common in many industries. Every promotion lowers the actual price paid by customers. So it makes sense that companies can routinely *raise* prices covertly by reducing the incentives they offer.

Even increasing the threshold for free shipping, from \$49 to \$99, is tantamount to a price increase. Customers might grumble when they realize their favorite deal is no longer available, but relatively few of them change their behavior in response.

#### 4. The sunk costs of memberships

Consider the following comparison: Which one is cheaper, a 64-ounce container of mayonnaise at a warehouse club that costs \$7.99, or a 48-ounce bottle of the same brand at a supermarket for \$5.94?

Most people will guess the warehouse club because of its low-price image. If you do the math, the price per ounce is roughly the same. But if you consider that the warehouse club requires a separate mandatory membership fee, the customer is actually paying more per ounce at the warehouse club.

Still, even though they pay it, most warehouse customers almost always ignore the initial fee, even if it's recurring. They treat it as a sunk cost and fail to account for it in calculating the actual price they are paying for an item.

Known as two-part pricing, the membership fee camouflages the actual price paid by customers—and is behind the success of [Costco](#), [Amazon](#) and likely your neighborhood gym. (A gym's initiation fee, a landlord's application or administrative fee, and an online ticket seller's per-transaction processing fee all serve the same purpose.)

#### 5. From good to better and from better to best

Another way to raise prices covertly is to introduce new, higher-quality versions at higher prices. This is called “good-better-best” pricing. Consumers like this approach because it gives them more choices. But its side effect is a stealthy price increase.

Many companies have used this method to benefit from higher consumer demand and earn higher prices during the pandemic. For example, Peloton lowered the price of its most popular basic spin bike by \$350, or 16%, from \$2,245 to \$1,895. At the same time, it introduced a more expensive and profitable new bike for \$2,495.

I believe that both moves effectively increased the average prices paid by Peloton customers, although the company won't confirm that's the case.

The smartest companies don't raise their prices with great fanfare, because direct price increases are often met with customer resistance. What they do instead is to employ nuanced pricing strategies to increase prices covertly, often keeping their regular or visible prices unchanged. Most customers don't notice, and some customers may even benefit by paying less. But in the end, the company enjoys higher sales and profit margins than before.

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HEADLINE	11/21 Who, and where, is Peng Shuai?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/21/world/asia/where-is-peng-shuai.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/21/world/asia/where-is-peng-shuai.html</a>
GIST	<p>A simple question has gripped the sports world and drawn the attention of the White House, United Nations and others:</p> <p>Where is Peng Shuai?</p> <p>The Chinese tennis star disappeared from public view for weeks this month after she <a href="#">accused a top Chinese leader</a> of sexual assault, prompting a global chorus of concern for her safety. Then, this weekend, the editor of a Communist Party-controlled newspaper <a href="#">posted video clips</a> that appear to show Ms. Peng eating at a restaurant and attending a tennis event in Beijing.</p> <p>A top official in women's tennis, Steve Simon, said it was <a href="#">“positive” to see the videos</a>, though he said he remained skeptical that Ms. Peng was making decisions freely. China's authoritarian government has a</p>

long record of iron-fisted treatment of people who threaten to undermine public confidence in the party's senior leaders.

With only a few months to go before Beijing hosts the 2022 Winter Olympic Games, Ms. Peng's case could become another point of tension in China's increasingly fractious relationship with the wider world.

### **Who Is Ms. Peng?**

Peng Shuai, 35 — her family name is pronounced “pung,” and the end of her given name rhymes with “why” — is a [three-time Olympian](#) whose tennis career began more than two decades ago.

In February 2014, after winning the doubles crown at Wimbledon with Hsieh Su-wei of Taiwan the year before, Ms. Peng rose to become a [world No. 1 in doubles](#), the first Chinese player, male or female, to attain the top rank in either singles or doubles. She and Ms. Hsieh took the 2014 French Open doubles title as well.

Her doubles career underwent a resurgence in 2016 and 2017. But in 2018, she was [barred from professional play for six months](#), with a three-month suspension, after she was found to have tried to use “coercion” and financial incentives to change her Wimbledon doubles partner after the sign-in deadline. She has [not competed professionally](#) since early 2020.

### **Why Did She Disappear?**

Late on the evening on Nov. 2, Ms. Peng posted a long note on the Chinese social platform Weibo that exploded across the Chinese internet.

In the posting, she accused Zhang Gaoli, 75, a former vice premier, of inviting her to his home about three years ago and coercing her into sex. “That afternoon, I didn’t consent at first,” she wrote. “I was crying the entire time.”

She and Mr. Zhang began a consensual, if conflicted, relationship after that, she wrote. Mr. Zhang had served from 2012 to 2017 on China's top ruling body, the Politburo Standing Committee.

Within minutes, censors scrubbed Ms. Peng's account from the Chinese internet. A digital blackout on her accusations has been in place ever since.

[Women in China](#) who come forward as victims of sexual assault and predation have long been met with censorship and pushback. But Ms. Peng's account, which has not been corroborated, is the first to implicate such a high-level Communist Party leader, which is why the authorities may have been extra diligent in silencing all discussion of the matter, at one point even blocking online searches for the word “tennis.”

### **How Has the World Responded?**

The censors might have succeeded had Mr. Simon, the head of the Women's Tennis Association, not [spoken out on Nov. 14](#), calling on Beijing to investigate Ms. Peng's accusations and stop trying to bury her case.

Confronting China has come with substantial consequences for other sports organizations. But Mr. Simon [told CNN](#) that the WTA was prepared to [pull its business](#) out of China over the matter.

Fellow tennis luminaries — the list so far includes Naomi Osaka, Roger Federer, Novak Djokovic, Serena Williams, Rafael Nadal and Billie Jean King — have been speaking out in support of Ms. Peng. The Spanish soccer star [Gerard Piqué](#) posted with the hashtag #WhereIsPengShuai to his 20 million Twitter followers.

The Biden Administration and United Nations human rights office have [joined the calls](#) for Beijing to provide proof of Ms. Peng's well-being.

The International Olympic Committee initially said that it was satisfied with reports that she was safe, though it later suggested that it was engaging in “[quiet diplomacy](#)” to untangle the situation. In [an interview with Reuters](#), the committee’s longest-serving member, Dick Pound, said he doubted the issue would lead to a cancellation of the Winter Games. But he also couldn’t rule it out, he said.

“If that’s not resolved in a sensible way very soon it may spin out of control,” Mr. Pound told the news agency.

On Saturday, The Wall Street Journal published an [essay by Enes Kanter](#), a center for the Boston Celtics, in which he called for the Winter Games to be moved from Beijing. Mr. Kanter has been a [vocal critic of the Chinese government](#), assailing its policies in [Tibet](#), [Xinjiang](#), [Hong Kong](#) and [Taiwan](#).

The National Basketball Association’s streaming partner in China has pulled Celtics games from its platform in response.

“All the gold medals in the world aren’t worth selling your values and your principles to the Chinese Communist Party,” Mr. Kanter wrote in The Journal.

### **What Has China Said?**

Nothing. Not officially, at least.

Instead, Chinese state-run news organizations and their employees have been the sole quasi-official voices from the country to weigh in. Notably, they are doing so on Twitter, which is blocked within China. Their messages appear to be aimed specifically at persuading the wider world.

First, a Chinese state broadcaster [posted an email on Twitter](#), written in English and attributed to Ms. Peng, that disavowed the assault accusation and said she was just “resting at home.” Mr. Simon [dismissed the email](#) as a crude fabrication and said it only deepened his concerns for the tennis star’s safety.

Then, Hu Xijin, the editor in chief of the state-controlled newspaper Global Times, began sharing videos that appear to show Ms. Peng with his 450,000 Twitter followers.

In Mr. Hu’s [first Twitter remarks on the subject](#), he said he didn’t believe Ms. Peng was being punished “for the thing that people talked about,” declining even to state the nature of her accusations.

On Saturday, Mr. Hu posted two video clips that he said he had “acquired.”

In one clip, a man is speaking with a woman who appears to be Ms. Peng at a restaurant when he refers to tomorrow as Nov. 20. Another woman at the table corrects him, saying tomorrow is the 21st. Ms. Peng nods in agreement.

The man appears to be [Zhang Junhui](#), an executive with the China Open tennis tournament.

On Sunday, Mr. Hu posted another clip, which he said had been shot by a Global Times employee, that shows Ms. Peng at the opening ceremony of a tennis event in Beijing. Zhang Junhui seems to be standing to Ms. Peng’s right.

The China Open posted photos from the same event on its [Weibo account](#) on Sunday. The photos show Ms. Peng waving to the crowd and autographing tennis balls, although the post does not name her.

Mr. Hu has not shared any of these videos on Weibo, where he has 24 million followers.

[In a statement](#), Mr. Simon of the WTA said the clips alone were “insufficient” to prove that Ms. Peng was not facing coercion.

“Our relationship with China is at a crossroads,” he said.

HEADLINE	<b>11/20 Calif. wildfires killed thousands of sequoias</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/20/us/california-fires-killed-sequoias.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/20/us/california-fires-killed-sequoias.html</a>
GIST	<p>Three wildfires in California in the past 15 months killed or mortally wounded thousands of mature giant sequoias, accounting for an estimated 13 to 19 percent of the world's population of the majestic trees, officials said on Friday.</p> <p>A National Park Service <a href="#">report</a> estimated that two fires in September, sparked by a lighting storm, caused 2,261 to 3,637 mature giant sequoias — or between 3 to 5 percent of the population of mature giant sequoias — to be killed or so severely burned that they were expected to die within five years. Mature giant sequoias have a diameter of more than four feet.</p> <p>Giant sequoias, which are found on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada in California, can live thousands of years on their way to dwarfing most everything around them. These trees include iconic national treasures like <a href="#">the General Sherman Tree</a>, which is considered the world's largest tree, standing at 275 feet tall with a diameter of 36 feet at the base.</p> <p>The death of the trees in staggering numbers is the product of a “deadly combination” of unnaturally dense forests caused by fire suppression that began about 150 years ago and increasingly intense droughts driven by climate change, Clay Jordan, superintendent of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks, said in an interview on Friday night.</p> <p>“That becomes a recipe for a catastrophic fire that threatens our sequoia groves, the health of our forests and, at the same time, threatens our communities,” he said. The mortality rates in the sequoias are unprecedented, he said.</p> <p>KNP Complex, one of the September fires, burned mostly within Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. The other, the Windy fire, burned in the Sequoia National Forest, the National Park Service said.</p> <p>The Castle fire, which began in August 2020, destroyed 7,500 to 10,600 large sequoias, park officials said, representing an estimated 10 to 14 percent of the entire Sierra Nevada population of large sequoias.</p> <p>Sequoias evolved to survive, and even thrive, in fires. But the ever-increasing intensity of fires in California has become too much for them.</p> <p>Experts say the fires that sequoias endured for centuries were mostly low grade. Thick bark and sky-high crowns protected the trees from serious damage. Heat from the flames even helped them reproduce by releasing seeds from their cones.</p> <p>But now, California's sequoia groves are dealing with the consequences of fire suppression that has left forests thick with flammable vegetation. Drought and rising temperatures have killed other plants and turned them into kindling.</p> <p>From 2015 to 2020, two-thirds of the giant sequoia groves across the Sierra Nevada were scorched in wildfires, compared with a quarter in the previous century, according to the National Park Service.</p> <p>The latest wildfires this year led to fewer tree deaths partly because of emergency actions taken by firefighters, said Christy Brigham, chief of resources management and science for the Sequoia and Kings Canyon parks. This included backfiring operations, breaking and thinning around certain trees, and blanketing some sequoias, like the General Sherman, in protective wrap.</p> <p>“While these losses are not as stark and large as the Castle fire, they are still significant, unsustainable and are outside the range of historic fire effects on large sequoias,” Dr. Brigham said at a news conference on Friday.</p>

	<p>She also said that “climate change is a driving force in what we’re seeing, and we can’t fix climate change by ourselves.”</p> <p>The fires may have some beneficial effects in areas that burned at low intensity, including fuel reduction, small canopy openings ideal for regeneration, removal of litter and generation of ash — ideal conditions for sequoia seedlings, the park service said.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 First Native American to lead Park Service</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/20/chuck-sams-national-park-service-confirmed-indigenous-americans">https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/20/chuck-sams-national-park-service-confirmed-indigenous-americans</a>
GIST	<p>Charles “Chuck” F Sams III made history this week in becoming the first-ever Native American confirmed to lead the National Park Service.</p> <p>Sams, an enrolled tribal member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, received unanimous consent by the US Senate on Thursday after being nominated by Joe Biden in August.</p> <p>Sam’s confirmation comes nearly 150 years after US leaders began the practice of establishing national parks upon ancestral lands that were often violently seized from Indigenous communities.</p> <p>Now, with the park service managing more than 400 areas across every state, along with the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, some Indigenous leaders see Sams’ appointment as a potential path toward healing from old but deeply rooted wounds.</p> <p>“I see this as an opportunity to reconcile that past, to heal that past, and to recognize the deep knowledge and wisdom that a Native American brings to that post,” said Fawn Sharp, president of the National Congress of American Indians and vice-president of the Quinault Indian Nation.</p> <p>In 1872, President Ulysses S Grant signed the Yellowstone National Park Protection Act into law, creating the country’s first national park. The establishment of this site and many others in the ensuing years have been hailed as a triumph, but came at a cost.</p> <p>In an interview with the Guardian, Jeanette Wolfley, a University of New Mexico School of Law professor, explained that members of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes once inhabited the area now known as Yellowstone national park. She said the park’s establishment had had a “devastating” effect on the community as members were barred from returning.</p> <p>Today, some tribal reservations actually overlap with national park spaces. For example, the Canyon de Chelly national monument is located within the Navajo Nation.</p> <p>Recognizing the history of these parks, Jonathan Jarvis, the last Senate-approved National Park Service director (he left the post in 2017), said over the last 20 years, there had been an effort by park service leaders to establish stronger relationships with Indigenous residents. During his tenure, for example, the agency restored the rights of traditionally affiliated nations to collect plants within a park’s boundaries.</p> <p>Sams, who has over 25 years of experience working in state and Indigenous governments as well as the non-profit natural resource and conservation management fields, could expand on this work.</p> <p>Jarvis said Sams would be responsible for implementing Biden’s park service agenda and would probably need to address such key issues as the parks’ major maintenance backlog and infrastructure needs, the impact of the climate crisis on these spaces and the parks’ response to Covid. But he will also have the opportunity to set his own vision for the parks.</p>



He could further boost Indigenous nations' ability to access key swaths of traditional vegetation by encouraging park officials to reach out to them directly to help establish collection agreements, explained Jarvis. And, although the park service already allows Indigenous people to access these spaces for ceremonies, he could issue a director's order making this process easier.

Jarvis said there was huge potential for Sams to "look where there are opportunities for true co-management, true stewardship in partnership with tribes" of these national park spaces.

Last month, Sams said in a statement as part of his nomination hearing in front of the Senate energy and natural resources committee: "If confirmed, I will bring this spirit of consultation to my service as director. I look forward to consulting with neighboring communities, stakeholders, local, state and tribal governments, and members of Congress, even when the conversations and topics are challenging."

But for some Indigenous people, healing from historical injustice is not simply a matter of boosting consultations or access to national parks; it's a matter of returning the lands.

Sharp, president of the National Congress of American Indians, said she would like to see national parks returned to Indigenous people. But she cautioned that returning these spaces would need to be an individualized process.

"Tribes are unique and distinct. And the national parks in some parts of the country may have tribal nations who are prepared and ready to assume management over those and others may not," she said.

Kat Brigham, chair of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation board of trustees, said she was extremely happy at the prospect of Sams taking his new position. She said she expected him to lead from "the tribal perspective", which she described as "taking care of the land, so the land can take care of you".

She said she hoped to see him help to spread awareness of the true history of these sites. She gave the example of Celilo Falls in Oregon, which was once a great gathering space for Indigenous people.

"He knows, for decades, that the tribes have been trying to get the federal and state agencies to start looking at things from a tribal perspective," she said. "I think he will be asking us a lot more questions. And they'll be involved more."

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HEADLINE	11/20 UN, US to China: where is tennis star?
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/19/peng-shuai-wta-prepared-to-pull-out-of-china-over-tennis-stars-disappearance">https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/19/peng-shuai-wta-prepared-to-pull-out-of-china-over-tennis-stars-disappearance</a>
GIST	<p>The UN has called on Chinese authorities to give proof of the whereabouts of tennis star <a href="#">Peng Shuai</a>, as the White House said it was "deeply concerned" and the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) said it was prepared to pull its tournaments out of China over the matter.</p> <p>Peng, a former doubles world No 1, has not been seen in public since she <a href="#">accused the former high-ranking official Zhang Gaoli of sexual assault</a> on 2 November.</p> <p>"It would be important to have proof of her whereabouts and wellbeing and we would urge that there be an investigation with full transparency into her allegations of sexual assault," Liz Throssell, a spokesperson for UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet, said in Geneva on Friday.</p> <p>White House spokesperson Jen Psaki also called for the Chinese government to provide "independent, verifiable proof" of Peng's whereabouts. Shortly after the UN call, photos purporting to show the tennis player were released by a Chinese state-affiliated journalist.</p>



Hu Xijin, the editor-in-chief of the state-run Global Times newspaper, wrote on Twitter that Peng has been staying in her own home “freely” and will make a public appearance “soon”.

“In the past few days, she stayed in her own home freely and she didn’t want to be disturbed. She will show up in public and participate in some activities soon,” Hu wrote.

Shen Shiwei revealed the set of photos, which he said were posted on Peng’s WeChat social media account on Friday. “Her friend shared the three photos and the screenshot of Peng’s WeChat moments,” the journalist [wrote on Twitter](#). But analysts debated the authenticity of the images.

Shen has been employed by China Global Television Network, the same state media network that [published the email](#) they claim was sent by Peng to the WTA.

The release of the images follows mounting concern for Peng’s wellbeing. On Friday, the WTA said it was prepared to pull its tournaments out of [China](#) if there was not an adequate response to her sexual assault allegation against the former senior Chinese politician.

Andrea Gaudenzi, the executive chairman of the Association of [Tennis](#) Professionals (ATP), which governs men’s tennis, released a second statement further stressing concern about Peng’s welfare.

“Developments in recent days in the case of Peng Shuai are deeply unsettling,” he said. “Her safety is our most immediate concern and clarity is required on the situation. The need for verifiable direct communication with her is vital.”

The men’s world No 1, Novak Djokovic, voiced his concern following his victory over Britain’s Cam Norrie at the ATP Finals in Turin, and said he supported “100%” the WTA’s threat to pull events out of China. “I support the statement of WTA,” Djokovic told reporters.

“The whole tennis community, needs to back [Peng] up and her family, make sure that she’s safe and sound because if you would have tournaments on Chinese soil without resolving this situation, it would be a little bit strange. I do understand why WTA has taken a stance like that.”

He added: “It’s important because this is horrifying. I mean, a person is missing. I hope that [we] find her very soon. It’s terrible. I mean, this could happen to anybody in any part of the world. It concerns the tennis world because she has been an international athlete for many years. She deserves at least our support.”

Other organisations and individuals to express their concern and support for Peng’s wellbeing on Friday included tennis champions Petra Kvitová and Simona Halep, the French Tennis Federation, the Dutch Olympic Committee and Athleten Deutschland, the association of German athletes. Feminist China, a social media account documenting China’s feminist movement, has scheduled a rally for Peng in New York on Sunday.

Meanwhile, since speaking out about Peng on Tuesday, Naomi Osaka’s Weibo profile has been censored, with users unable to leave comments on her most recent post and screenshots of her Twitter post removed. Despite the censors, Weibo users have been leaving messages on the pages of Osaka, Serena Williams, Djokovic and other players, thanking them for speaking out about their colleague.

In a lengthy 2 November post on Weibo, which was deleted half an hour later, Peng alleged that Zhang had forced her into sex after inviting her to his house to play tennis with him and his wife three years ago.

Peng also said she and Zhang had previously had an on-off consensual relationship. She added in the post that she could provide no evidence to back her allegations, but was determined to speak out.

Neither Zhang nor the Chinese government have commented on Peng’s allegation and discussion of the topic has been blocked on China’s heavily censored internet.

Concern among the global tennis community and beyond has grown over Peng's safety and whereabouts since her allegation, with the WTA calling for an investigation and the world's top players tweeting #WhereIsPengShuai.

On Thursday the WTA Tour chairman and CEO, Steve Simon, went further, telling US media the WTA, which has 10 events scheduled in China for 2022 worth tens of millions of dollars, was willing to pull them.

"We are at a crossroads with our relationship with China and operating our business over there," Simon told CNN in an interview. "We're definitely willing to pull our business and deal with all the complications that come with it because this is certainly bigger than the business."

Simon said the WTA must demand justice and could not compromise. "Women need to be respected and not censored," he said. His comments were welcomed by current and former tennis players, including Billie Jean King.

Simon has said the WTA had not been able to speak to Peng, and he was very concerned for her. The threat to pull out of China followed the release of what Chinese state media claimed was an email from Peng to Simon saying "everything is fine". Simon said the claim – which was accompanied by a screenshot of text – only made him more worried, and he doubted it came from Peng.

China has been the focus of aggressive WTA expansion over the last decade and hosted nine tournaments in the 2019 season – the last before the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. It offered a total \$30.4m of prize money and account for a significant portion of the WTA's revenues.

But it is also under increasing pressure over a number of human rights issues, and there are growing calls for a boycott of the upcoming Beijing Winter Olympic Games. The WTA's stance over Peng, should it follow through, goes considerably further than that of many sporting organisations.

Three-times grand slam winner Andy Murray also added his voice to the #WhereIsPengShuai campaign on Twitter on Friday while the Professional Tennis Players Association, a new body set up by Djokovic and Canadian player Vasek Pospisil, said players must be prepared to take action if Peng's safety cannot be confirmed.

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HEADLINE	11/19 Pierce Co. 'officer needs help' call common
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article255903886.html">https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article255903886.html</a>
GIST	<p>Massive police responses like the one triggered when Sheriff Ed Troyer squared off with a newspaper carrier earlier this year are not uncommon in Pierce County, a News Tribune analysis found.</p> <p>There were 230 "officer needs help" alerts sent out by South Sound 911 dispatchers from 2011 through January, records show. South Sound 911 dispatches for nearly all law enforcement and fire agencies in Pierce County.</p> <p>Troyer's Jan. 27 altercation, which led to criminal charges being filed against the sheriff and a lawsuit against the county, was one of three "officer needs help" calls that month. Over the last decade, each year ranged from 10 to 34 sizable emergency responses in Pierce County.</p> <p>Many of the calls were false alarms or quickly resolved. Only a dozen or so resulted in police reports being written or anybody being taken into custody.</p> <p>By comparison, Thurston 911 Communications could only recall one or two "officer needs help" calls in the last decade, and the King County Sheriff's Office said they had fewer than 10 in the last 14 years. Snohomish County 911 estimated it had a call like that every few months.</p>

The number of “officer needs help” calls vary so much between agencies because each has different criteria for when that code should be used.

One expert says taking parts of each agency’s policies and blending them together would be best to ensure officers in trouble get immediate help but cut down on unnecessary massive police responses.

South Sound 911 can issue an “officer needs help” alert if police ask for it, or if a passerby calls in with concern about an officer appearing to be in trouble. In King and Thurston counties, that code is used only if an officer hits an emergency button or radios in that there is an imminent threat.

“Every agency is a little bit different in terms of how they manage officer needs help calls,” King County sheriff’s Sgt. Tim Meyer said.

#### HOW SUCH CALLS WORK IN PIERCE COUNTY

When South Sound 911 was setting procedures for how to deal with various calls in 2012, they checked in with local law enforcement agencies to see what would make officers feel most safe and comfortable. In Pierce County, the answer was to err on the side of caution when someone’s life could be at stake. That’s why there are several situations when South Sound 911 dispatchers can send out an “officer needs help” alert.

An officer or deputy could radio and ask for priority backup, a passerby can call 911 to report seeing an officer in trouble or dispatchers might choose to use the code if they hear microphone clips or yelling on an officer’s frequency that could indicate danger.

“If we have reasonable indication that an officer needs assistance, we treat it as an emergency,” South Sound 911 deputy director Scott Hamel said. “It doesn’t matter to us who says an officer needs help. If they’re reporting as a reliable witness, we want to make sure we get help started and sort out who it is and whether they need assistance.”

Out of the 230 “officer needs help” alerts sent out from 2011 through January, only 12 resulted in police reports, indicating that most of the incidents were not life-threatening. In Troyer’s case, a dispatcher used the code because he was concerned about the sheriff’s safety after Troyer said the other man had threatened to kill him.

Five of the dozen calls since 2011 were prompted by law enforcement officers seeking help, and six were from passersby calling 911. All but two were actual emergencies. In both the non-emergencies, women with suspected mental health problems called 911 with what turned out to be fabricated stories.

In August 2016, a woman called and told dispatchers a sheriff’s deputy had been shot in the face. That sent 38 deputies speeding to the scene, where it turned out there was no shooting. The woman, who was arrested on suspicion of making a false report, told deputies she got information on the shooting from telekinesis.

In May 2020, a woman called 911 to reporting seeing a Tacoma officer down after a struggle in an alley where four gunshots were fired. Forty-seven officers from multiple agencies responded and found no danger. The woman was involuntarily committed for observation.

Police expressed concern about the false report, pointing out that having 47 officers start to respond to a scene placed any number of them in grave danger due to the “urgency of a call of this nature,” according to the police report.

Half of the “officer needs help” calls that resulted in police reports involved officers struggling with suspects. One was from an off-duty officer calling in shots fired at a concert. Another was because a deputy’s patrol car was struck by a driver who lost control in the snow on Spanaway Loop Road.

Then there was a trash collector who called 911 in November 2020 to report seeing a deputy down behind a patrol car in a parking lot. The deputy had suffered a medical emergency and died at the scene.

The variety of calls coming in a variety of ways “stresses the importance of reporting emergencies, and if we didn’t take those phone calls as emergencies, there could be a delay in service,” South Sound 911 Communications Center director Deann Baumann said.

It’s up to the individual officers and deputies to decide whether it makes sense for them to respond based on the type of call and their location. “The premise for telling everyone is because we don’t know where everyone is,” Hamel said. “We relay what we know is going on, and the units for the agencies decide if they’re going to respond or not.”

Although dozens of officers might start to respond to these types of incidents, the number of those who actually arrive on scene are significantly lower because dispatchers will either relay updated information or the first officer on scene will call others off.

For Troyer’s confrontation with a newspaper carrier, more than 40 law enforcement officers started to respond but only 14 arrived on scene.

Sixty percent of the “officer needs help” calls in Pierce County over the last decade were deemed calls where officers did indeed need help. The others were changed later to various types of calls, including suspicious people, agency assist, weapons violations, disorderly conduct and vandalism.

#### HOW THEY WORK ELSEWHERE

Other emergency dispatch agencies have stricter guidelines for when an “officer needs help” alert can be sent out. For Thurston County 911 Communications, the request must come directly from law enforcement. Dispatchers can then send out the alert on the radio or via mobile computers in patrol cars directing all available units to that area.

Currently, officers in trouble would have to request help on the radio but the agency is in the process of a \$30 million upgrade that will buy radios with emergency buttons that officers can press if they’re unable to make a call.

The upgrade was deemed necessary after the Dec. 18, 2017, Amtrak train derailment near DuPont that killed three people and injured 65. Each dispatching agency had a different radio system, which complicated communications for rescue efforts. The agencies had to have a representative physically post up at the incident command post to relay plans back to their respective departments.

“In the new system, we will have greater interoperability and can be on mutual aid channels together,” executive director Keith Flewelling said. He’s been on the job since 2014 and can’t recall a single “officer needs help” alert going out in Thurston County.

At the King County Sheriff’s Office dispatch center, there are three ways for the “officer needs help” code to be triggered. The request can come directly from a deputy in trouble, another law enforcement agency can ask for help or a deputy could be heard over the radio fighting with someone but not respond to communication attempts from dispatchers.

“We just don’t get a lot of 1033s,” Meyer said, using the standardized code for “officer needs help.” “I’ve been here 14 years, and I have heard less than 10, and that’s maybe a generous number.”

911 calls from passersby who suspect an officer or deputy is in trouble cannot trigger massive emergency responses in Thurston or King counties, though dispatchers would directly check in with the officer believed to be in trouble to see what’s going on. Snohomish County 911 falls somewhere in the middle of operations at Pierce and King and Thurston counties.

Hattie Schweitzer, one of the Snohomish operations managers, said “officer needs help” alerts are only sent out when law enforcement is “in a fight for life or a life-threatening situation.” That means the officer must call for help or press the emergency button on his or her radio, though passersby can also call in apparent emergencies that dispatchers will follow up on. Those types of emergency responses are not common in Snohomish County though. “It’s not usual for it to happen,” Schweitzer said. “I would use the word rarely. It’s not as rare as it used to be, but we’re a busier county than we used to be.” ONE

**EXPERT’S OPINION** Although nationally recognized organizations for public safety communications provide standards for how to set up operations, they do not provide specifics on how to handle certain types of calls.

That’s why there are so many differences in how dispatching agencies in Washington state handle “officer needs help” calls. Christine Burke, founder of Strategic Intelligence Services and a consultant for police dispatch communications, said she has concerns about how South Sound 911, Thurston 911 Communications, King County Sheriff’s dispatch and Snohomish County 911 each handle massive emergency responses.

“I don’t agree that only the officer should be able to call for help because you have situations where the officer may be unconscious or unable to speak or use their hands. You can’t get on the radio because you’re fighting for your life,” Burke said.

“On the other hand, dispatching everybody all the time may not make sense if it’s not adjusted based on the call type.”

She recommended giving dispatchers the responsibility to analyze the information available and decide how many law enforcement officers are necessary to respond.

In Troyer’s case, Burke said she understands more than 40 officers and deputies starting to rush to the scene with the information known at the time. “That’s the sheriff. That’s your top guy,” she said. “If your sheriff calls, you go.”

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## Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	11/21 Seattle Rainier Valley shooting: 1 dead
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/investigation-underway-after-1-dead-another-injured-rainier-valley-shooting/45M5J3M44BDRPFOJHK7F2R5KYA/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/investigation-underway-after-1-dead-another-injured-rainier-valley-shooting/45M5J3M44BDRPFOJHK7F2R5KYA/</a>
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — An investigation is underway after a fatal shooting Sunday night in Seattle’s Rainier Valley.</p> <p>Seattle police closed the northbound and southbound lanes of MLK Jr Way South and Rainier Avenue South, where the double shooting happened.</p> <p>Seattle fire said one person died at the scene and an approximately 25-year-old man was taken to Harborview Medical Center in critical condition.</p> <p>It is not yet known what led to the shooting.</p> <p>The investigation is ongoing.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/21 Police warn stores: potential more looting
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.siliconvalley.com/2021/11/21/three-arrested-after-saturday-night-looting-at-walnut-creek-nordstrom/">https://www.siliconvalley.com/2021/11/21/three-arrested-after-saturday-night-looting-at-walnut-creek-nordstrom/</a>

## GIST

Walnut Creek police and city officials warned businesses Sunday that the same group of thieves that targeted a Nordstrom at Broadway Plaza on Saturday night may try to steal from shops again tonight.

While the thievery threat is unconfirmed, and a specific location and time remain unknown, police who are “actively monitoring intelligence” said in a community tweet that businesses “may consider closing early or taking other precautions ... out of an abundance of caution.”

According to the tweet, the Walnut Creek police are calling out additional officers and reserves.

Some stores in the area were heeding the advice of police. The manager of the MAC Cosmetics store at Broadway Plaza confirmed they were closing early today and will do so again Monday. Employees at the Tiffany & Co. jewelry store on South Main Street said they were taking extra precautions but wouldn't offer specifics.

On Saturday night, two men and one woman were arrested after dozens of looters ransacked the Nordstrom store during what police called an “organized” and “planned” robbery. Approximately 80 people were involved in the incident, which occurred shortly before 9 p.m. when Nordstrom and other stores at the center were still open.

“This is a horrific crime,” Walnut Creek Mayor Kevin Wilk said Sunday. “It’s terrible. Not just for the people who live here but for those employed. We need to ensure the safety of all those in Walnut Creek.”

Police said they would be stepping up their presence in the downtown area in response to the Saturday looting incident and warnings about another possible incident on Sunday. In August, after an uptick in crime at the Nordstrom store, the Walnut Creek City Council [unanimously voted to increase the police presence in the area](#).

“We need to do whatever we can to ensure that these kind of brazen incidents don’t happen,” Wilk said. “We need to respond aggressively to these types of threats.”

Wilk added that Walnut Creek police became aware of Saturday’s Nordstrom looting plans through electronic chatter moments before it occurred, but weren’t able to prevent it from happening. Police did not respond to a request asking for further details about the warning.

The three suspects arrested at the scene are ages 18, 30 and 32. Two are from San Francisco and the other is from Oakland. The three were arrested on suspicion of robbery, burglary, conspiracy and possession of stolen property. All three were booked late Saturday night at the Martinez Detention Facility.

The woman was also arrested on suspicion of illegal possession of a firearm by a felon and carrying a concealed weapon. According to San Mateo Superior Court records, she previously had been charged with shoplifting, prostitution, resisting arrest, possession of burglary tools and the use of a stun gun in incidents in 2016 and 2017.

She is currently being held on \$275,000 bail while the other two suspects are being held on \$200,000 bail each.

During Saturday night’s looting spree, police said two Nordstrom employees were assaulted and another was pepper sprayed. According to city spokeswoman Betsy Burkhart, the employees’ injuries were minor and they were treated at the scene.

Police are continuing to review video surveillance footage and Mayor Wilk said authorities are also reviewing data picked up by automated license plate readers.

	<p>The incident mirrors <a href="#">one that happened on Friday night at a Louis Vuitton store</a> in San Francisco's Union Square, where several dozen looters stole merchandise. A police spokesman said they have arrested several individuals involved and were also responding to other incidents of looting in the surrounding area. On Sunday, police said they were "controlling and limiting" traffic around Union Square.</p> <p>Burkhart said Walnut Creek police don't know whether the Nordstrom looting is connected to the Louis Vuitton one, but that they will be reaching out to authorities in San Francisco.</p> <p>Amid the protests in response to the murder of George Floyd in summer 2020, Walnut Creek <a href="#">imposed a citywide curfew after a woman was shot and looters targeted stores at Broadway Plaza</a>. In December, the Contra Costa District Attorney <a href="#">filed charges against nine individuals</a>, accusing them of stealing from the Walnut Creek mall during those protests.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 CBP, HSI warn of counterfeit goods</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.hstoday.us/cbp/cbp-and-hsi-warn-the-public-about-counterfeit-goods-ahead-of-black-friday/">https://www.hstoday.us/cbp/cbp-and-hsi-warn-the-public-about-counterfeit-goods-ahead-of-black-friday/</a>
GIST	<p>On November 18, 2021, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in New York hosted a joint media event highlighting counterfeit goods. Just in time for Black Friday, Cyber Monday and the rest of the holiday shopping madness, HSI and CBP offered a presentation about counterfeit goods and how consumers can protect themselves from purchasing "knockoffs" of brand-name items.</p> <p>"CBP's primary mission is to protect our nation while facilitating legitimate travel and trade. This includes protecting consumers from unsafe goods. We execute this mission by partnering with industry, HSI, other federal agencies and foreign governments to detect and intercept cross-border trade in these harmful and dangerous illicit goods," said Frank Russo, Director of CBP's New York Field Office. "The risks associated with purchasing counterfeit good are sizable. The lower prices you pay may come with a high cost to you and your family."</p> <p>"Shoppers this holiday season need to be on the lookout for potentially hazardous products while hunting for an online deal. Besides the potential danger of faulty electronics or tainted personal care products, you will also be wasting your hard-earned money on fake branding. Buying from dubious websites can also put your personal and financial information at risk," said Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) New York, Deputy Special Agent in Charge Erik Rosenblatt. "HSI is engaged globally to dismantle the transnational criminal organizations that exploit the legitimate online market, and in the end, endanger our communities."</p> <p>CBP and HSI protect businesses and consumers every day through an aggressive Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) enforcement program, and IPR enforcement remains a <a href="#">CBP Priority Trade Issue</a>.</p> <p>Every year, CBP seizes a wide variety of counterfeit products from all over the world. In FY 2020, CBP seized over 26,000 shipments of counterfeit goods that violated IPR worth over \$1.3 billion, had the goods been genuine.</p> <p>The theft of intellectual property and the trade in substandard and often dangerous goods threaten America's economy, stifle innovation and are a danger to consumer health and safety. Further, these illicit activities fund criminal activities and support trans-national organized crime. CBP has established the Truth Behind Counterfeits educational campaign to raise consumer awareness about the health and safety, legal and economic consequences of purchasing counterfeit goods. For more information, visit <a href="http://www.cbp.gov/fakegoodsrealdangers">www.cbp.gov/fakegoodsrealdangers</a>.</p> <p>If you have any information regarding suspected fraud or illegal trade activity, please contact CBP through the <a href="#">e-Allegations Online Trade Violation Reporting System</a> or by calling 1-800-BE-ALERT. IPR violations can also be reported to the National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center at <a href="https://www.iprcenter.gov/referral/">https://www.iprcenter.gov/referral/</a> or by telephone at 1-866-IPR-2060.</p>



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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Haiti: 2 of 17 kidnapped missionaries freed</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/21/world/americas/haiti-missionaries-kidnapping.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/21/world/americas/haiti-missionaries-kidnapping.html</a>
GIST	<p>Two of the 17 people with an American missionary group who were kidnapped in Haiti more than a month ago have been released, the organization said Sunday.</p> <p>The hostages, who included women and children, were seized by one of Haiti's most fearsome gangs on Oct. 16 as the missionary group visited an orphanage outside the capital, Port-au-Prince.</p> <p>In announcing that two of them had been released, the group, Christian Aid Ministries, based in Ohio, said it would not make public their names or say why they were freed. But the group said that those released are "safe, in good spirits, and being cared for."</p> <p>The ministry urged discretion to protect those still in the hands of the gang members.</p> <p>"We ask that those who have more specific information about the release and the individuals involved would safeguard that information," its statement said. A spokesman for Christian Aid Ministries did not immediately respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>The group of hostages, which included 16 Americans and one Canadian, had been working with Christian Aid Ministries before being abducted by a gang called 400 Mawozo, which is infamous for orchestrating mass kidnappings.</p> <p>The gang initially demanded a ransom of \$1 million per person, but that was widely viewed as a start to the negotiations that are common in kidnappings in Haiti. It was not immediately clear how much money, if any, was paid.</p> <p>The U.S. government responded carefully to the news. "We welcome reports that two individuals held hostage in Haiti have been released," a State Department spokesperson said. "We do not have further comment at this time."</p> <p>The spokesman for the Haitian National Police, Gary Desrosiers, confirmed that two hostages were released on Sunday, although in its statement, Christian Aid Ministries did not specify when they were freed.</p> <p>It remained unclear why only two of the 17 hostages were released — whether their family or friends had cobbled together the ransom, perhaps, or if the gang had taken pity on them for a medical condition or some other reason. In some previous kidnappings, the 400 Mawozo gang released several hostages who were severely ill or elderly from a larger group.</p> <p>The youngest hostage seized from the missionary group was an infant.</p> <p>Since the kidnapping, Christian Aid Missionaries has been involved in protracted negotiations for the group's release, with the gang demanding more money and the missionary group offering to bring services into their area instead, an official with knowledge of the matter said.</p> <p>The mass kidnapping of more than a dozen American citizens, five children among them, set off a furor, with U.S. lawmakers condemning the violence in Haiti, and the F.B.I. and the State Department working with the local authorities to win the missionaries' freedom.</p> <p>Mass abductions have become commonplace in Haiti, but the brazen kidnapping in broad daylight shocked even local officials and residents accustomed to gang-fueled violence, a further sign of the country's growing lawlessness.</p>

American officials estimate that tens of thousands of Haitian Americans are in Haiti at any given moment, either because they live there or because they go back and forth between the countries regularly. They are prime targets for abduction, and every time a ransom is paid, the gangs get encouragement to look for new victims.

Security in the country has broken down in the wake of numerous natural disasters and political crises, including the assassination in July of President Jovenel Moïse. That has allowed gangs to increase their stranglehold over Port-au-Prince and its suburbs, where nearly half the nation lives. Violence has overwhelmed much of the capital, and by some estimates, gangs now control about half the city.

Many gangs wield enough power to bring the country to its knees.

Last month, one prominent criminal group blocked the delivery of fuel to much of the country, plunging Haiti into darkness and halting everything from hospital operations to cellphone connectivity.

The gangs, which often have political backing, have long been part of the country's social fabric, but after Mr. Moïse's killing, they have turned more assertive, taking control of vast swaths of territory.

Haitian officials estimate that 400 Mawozo is making about \$70,000 a week from activities like kidnapping and extortion, and say it has recently moved into human trafficking and organ theft from kidnapping victims who cannot come up with the ransom.

The gangs are equipped with a steady supply of arms smuggled from the United States, including assault weapons like AR-15s. That gives them far more firepower than that available to the average police officer. About a dozen or so gangs are so powerful they are able to operate like a paramilitary force, a senior Haitian security official said in a recent interview. The official asked for anonymity in order to share sensitive information.

Morale within Haiti's security forces is low, and it is not unusual for police officers to start up their own gang or defect to those that are already established, while continuing to work for the government.

The criminal groups also benefit from regular payments from powerful business tycoons who pay "protection fees" so their operations do not come under attack. Politicians have also paid gangs to spread their influence and suppress voting during national elections.

In the absence of a fully functioning government since the killing of Mr. Moïse, the gangs' power has only grown.

A spate of natural disasters has made things only worse.

In August, a magnitude 7.2 earthquake deepened the devastation of a country that has yet to recover from a quake in 2010 that killed more than 200,000 people. Rescue efforts this summer were initially hampered by security concerns, and aid flowed freely only after gangs that controlled a highway connecting the southern peninsula to the rest of Haiti declared a truce.

A severe storm followed days later.

In recent weeks, Haitian security forces have stepped up their operations to counter the criminal organizations, but security experts say that the government lacks a coherent strategy. The Haitian police need a complete overhaul, with thousands more police officers needed, a renewed focus on vetting during recruitment and money to buy new equipment, increase salaries and restore morality, American officials say.

Unless a reformed police force can step in to reimpose control after neighborhoods are cleared of the gangs, observers say, the government will be unable to restore stability.

	The surging gang violence has prompted peaceful protests of late, with groups in towns and cities demanding a government response. Some blockaded roads and set tires on fire, a common protest symbol in Haiti.
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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Driver plows SUV into holiday parade</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/21/us/wisconsin-parade-crash-shooting.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/21/us/wisconsin-parade-crash-shooting.html</a>
GIST	<p>WAUKESHA, Wis. — It was supposed to be a celebratory night in Waukesha, Wis. Dance groups and high school bands and politicians were marching along Main Street in the Milwaukee suburb’s Christmas parade, which was returning from a pandemic hiatus.</p> <p>Then, just before 4:40 p.m., the driver of a red S.U.V. stormed past barricades and barreled through the crowd, striking dozens. At least five people were killed and 40 people were injured, and the numbers could change, city authorities said in a <a href="#">statement</a> late Sunday. Area hospitals reported treating dozens of patients, including many children. It was unclear what might have motivated the episode.</p> <p>“Today our community faced horror and tragedy in what should have been a community celebration,” said Mayor Shawn Reilly, who described seeing smiling children and happy parents when he marched along the parade route before the incident. “I’m deeply saddened to know that so many in our community went to a parade but ended up dealing with injury and heartache.”</p> <p>Chief Daniel Thompson of the Waukesha Police Department said on Sunday night that a person of interest was in custody and that there was no further threat. Eyewitnesses described the driver as male, but that was not confirmed by the police. Chief Thompson said shots were fired by the police at the driver.</p> <p>A spokesman for Children’s Wisconsin said that hospital, which treats only pediatric patients, had admitted 15 people on Sunday. Details about their conditions were not immediately available. Another hospital, Aurora Medical Center–Summit, said in a statement that it was treating 13 patients, including three in critical condition. Officials at Froedtert Hospital said they also had received patients but did not specify how many.</p> <p>The tragedy spoiled what participants and onlookers described as a joyous night in Waukesha, a bedroom community about 20 miles west of Milwaukee. More than 60 entries, from the Waukesha Fire Department to the Old Car Club to Santa, were scheduled to march through downtown.</p> <p>This was the 58th Christmas parade for Waukesha, an annual event that was canceled last year because of the pandemic. The theme of this year’s event was simply “Comfort and Joy.”</p> <p>Mikey Randa, 14, said he was marching in the parade with his high school football team when he saw a young girl hit by the car.</p> <p>“The car just flew past us, there was a lot of panic,” he said, adding that he initially didn’t grasp what had happened. Mr. Randa said he then saw five or six bodies lying on the ground. “I’m still in a bit of a shock,” he said.</p> <p>All Waukesha public schools will be closed Monday, the police department said in a statement Sunday night.</p> <p>Jason Kellner, 49, said that he had just watched his son, a drum player in the Waukesha South High School marching band, pass by, when he first saw a red Ford Escape heading toward the crowd. After passing through an intersection, Mr. Kellner said, the car “started mowing people down.”</p> <p>“I’ve never felt a worse feeling; wondering what I’m going to find when I get to my kid,” Mr. Kellner said of the moment he ran toward his son, whom he found standing unharmed by the side of the road.</p>

Mr. Kellner said he pulled a bloody saxophone off the street and saw several people, apparently injured, on the ground.

“Right now, I’m just angry,” Mr. Kellner said. “It seems everywhere we turn, it’s just another violent day in the U.S.”

Tyler Kotlarek, 28, was watching the parade with family members when they heard what at first sounded like cheering, but then they realized “it was screams,” he said. “It was the worst thing I’ve ever seen in my life.”

Mr. Kotlarek said the driver appeared to intentionally steer toward people. That account had not been confirmed by the police.

“He was going from side to side, targeting people,” Mr. Kotlarek said. “The car bombed through. He was flying through there going intentionally from left to right.”

The Milwaukee Dancing Grannies, which were among the parade entrants, said on Facebook that members and volunteers had been impacted “and we are waiting for word on their conditions.” Officials with the Xtreme Dance team, another group that marched, asked for thoughts, prayers and “privacy to process the tragic events.” The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Milwaukee said a priest, as well as parishioners and students at a local Catholic school, were among the injured.

Tom Hickey, 25, was walking near a friend’s float at the back of the parade when he heard honking behind him. A man wearing a sweatshirt and gray hat who was driving the red Ford Escape was trying to make his way through the crowd, he said. Mr. Hickey said he thought the driver was lost.

Then, the driver took a right turn onto the main parade route, gunned the engine and moved through the parade route at what appeared to be top speed, he said.

“When he made that right turn, that’s when he turned really dangerous,” Mr. Hickey said.

Angelito Tenorio, a candidate for state treasurer, had just finished marching in the parade and was circling back to Main Street when he saw the S.U.V. speeding along the route.

“All of a sudden I heard a loud bang,” said Mr. Tenorio, an alderman for nearby West Allis. “Then I heard deafening cries and screams. It was very gut-wrenching.”

He described a chaotic scene that left him stunned and shaking.

“People were running away, leaving their belongings behind, sobbing,” he said. “When the crowd cleared out, it looked like there were people on the ground who might have been struck by the vehicle.”

In a video posted on the city’s Facebook page, the S.U.V. can be seen speeding down the parade route and screams can be heard from those in the crowd. Then, seconds later, a police officer runs by, followed by a number of police vehicles as a group of children stops performing.

Peggy Tom, 58, said that after the car sped past her, she walked down the street searching for a friend, whom she later found out was injured.

There were “piles of instruments,” Ms. Tom said, “and shoes.”

Others walking through the chaotic scene, she added, were shouting the names of lost loved ones.

Don Paul Browne, a city alderman, was marching in the parade with the mayor but had already left and did not witness what happened. He said the city was celebrating its 125th anniversary.

	<p>He described the parade as a family-friendly event that draws spectators from other counties. He struggled to understand what happened, he said, because there were no political undertones or controversy connected with the parade.</p> <p>Hours later, the families and band members were gone and residents were being asked to avoid downtown. But along the parade route, resting against the entrance to The Steaming Cup coffeehouse, three lawn chairs were illuminated by flashing red and blue police lights.</p> <p>Two of the chairs — one pink, the other blue — were child sized.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/19 Colorado: ‘sex offender’ negative label</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://denver.cbslocal.com/2021/11/19/sex-offender-negative-label/">https://denver.cbslocal.com/2021/11/19/sex-offender-negative-label/</a>
GIST	<p><b>DENVER (CBS4)</b>– The way sex offenders are labeled is changing in Colorado. The board that sets state standards voted today to change the term “sex offenders” to reflect so-called “person-first” language.</p> <p>The Sex Offender Management Board, which is made up of everyone from public defenders to prosecutors, sets standards and guidelines for treatment providers so the new terminology will only be used in that context. It doesn’t change the term sex offender in law or the criminal justice system but some worry it’s a step in that direction.</p> <p>“I’m involved today after hearing that it would be improper or offensive in some manner for me to refer to the man who raped me, as a sex offender.”</p> <p>A rape survivor, Kimberly Corbin is among those who spoke out against changing the term sex offender to something less stigmatizing, saying labels based on traits people can’t control is one thing, “It’s very, very damaging for those who people who are labeled when it has to do with gender, race, sexuality, ability, but those are not their choices, the biggest thing for me is these are choices that sex offenders make.”</p> <p>Derek Logue says he shouldn’t have to carry the label for life, “Referring to me by a label for something I did half my life ago is inappropriate and downright offensive.”</p> <p>He argued “client” would be a better term.</p> <p>Public Defender Kathy Heffron agreed, “It takes into consideration the uniqueness of individuals who are receiving treatment.”</p> <p>“Client” is one of five options the board considered.</p> <p>Supports of the change in terminology argue it will reduce recidivism. Opponents say it will only reduce accountability, noting victims and survivors live with their label for life.</p> <p>In the end, the board voted 10-6 to go with “adults who commit sexual offenses.”</p> <p>“I think this strikes a balance that honors the impact to victims and recognizes the current and ongoing impacts of sexual assault but also avoids the labeling term that has negative impacts on those who commit sex offenses.”</p> <p>Jessica Dotter with the Colorado District Attorneys’ Council worries the change won’t end with the Sex Offender Management Board, “I’m concerned that the use of person-first language generally is an intent to remove accountability from offenders and to diminish the experience of the victims”</p> <p>Last year, lawmakers considered a bill that would have, among other things, eliminated the term “sexually violent predator” from statutes but they ended up pulling it. Meanwhile, a task force charged with sentencing reform is considering asking the legislature to change terms like “defendant,” “convict,” and “felon” to “justice-involved people.”</p>

	Ironically, the Sex Offender Management Board will not drop “sex offender” from its name because only the state Legislature can change the name of the board.
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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Protesters corner Portland police in garage</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10226225/WATCH-Portland-police-cornered-garage-protesters-riots-Kyle-Rittenhouse-verdict.html">https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10226225/WATCH-Portland-police-cornered-garage-protesters-riots-Kyle-Rittenhouse-verdict.html</a>
GIST	<p>Video captured the moment protesters in <a href="#">Portland</a> cornered police in a garage during riots over the <a href="#">Kyle Rittenhouse</a> verdict.</p> <p>The footage shows a crowd of angry protesters aggressively yelling at the police dressed in full riot gear. The group of nearly a dozen officers are seen backing up into a garage.</p> <p>The door of the garage slowly closes as the protesters continue to confront the police, with one demonstrator even trying to push open the garage door.</p> <p>Many of the protesters shouted profanities at the officers, with one repeatedly screaming: 'What's up?'</p> <p>Around 150 protesters on Friday started small fires that were quickly extinguished, according to an eyewitness, who said no tear gas or rubber bullets were fired.</p> <p>Hours after the verdict, police in Portland were forced to declare a riot after about 200 protesters turned destructive, damaging the front gate of the Multnomah County Justice Center and clashing with officers.</p> <p>'Due to violent, destructive behavior by a significant part of the crowd, the gathering in downtown Portland is a RIOT. All participants are instructed to proceed away to the WEST,' the Portland Police Bureau wrote on Twitter.</p> <p>Portland Police Bureau Chief Chuck Lovell said during a Friday press conference that it was 'reasonable' to expect protests in that city as well.</p> <p>'Here in Portland especially, it's reasonable to expect there will be some type of reaction to the verdict,' Lovell told reporters. 'Like we've said many, many times, we're supportive of peaceful protest, people exercising their First Amendment rights.'</p> <p>Masses of people gathered coast-to-coast Friday night to decry Rittenhouse's acquittal in protests that reflected the divisiveness and anger stoked by the high-profile case.</p> <p>Rittenhouse, 18, was acquitted by jurors on all charges - two counts of homicide, one count of attempted homicide for wounding a third man, and two counts of recklessly endangering safety - after killing two people during protests marred by arson, rioting and looting on August 25, 2020, in Kenosha, Wisconsin following the police shooting of Jacob Blake, a black man.</p> <p>According to Portland police, rioters threw objects at officers, smashed the rear window of a police car as well as windows from the city print shop and spray-painted the justice center building with graffiti that read 'all cops are Kyles, no justice, no peace', <a href="#">FOX 12</a> reported.</p> <p>Protesters were warned they would be arrested and were subject to force if they remained in the area.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Mistrial: man charged in 18 Texas deaths</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/texas-dallas-6a915f654950f09f314ee31283217f1a">https://apnews.com/article/texas-dallas-6a915f654950f09f314ee31283217f1a</a>

DALLAS (AP) — A Texas judge declared a mistrial Friday in the first murder case against a man charged with killing 18 older women in the Dallas area over a two-year span, but prosecutors vowed to continue to pursue convictions.

Judge Raquel Jones issued the ruling when a jury deadlocked after deliberating since Thursday afternoon in the capital murder case charging Billy Chemirmir with killing 81-year-old Lu Thi Harris.

Dallas County District Attorney John Creuzot said he was committed to retrying the case and bringing another one against the 48-year-old. “Our commitment was to get two convictions and that does not change,” Creuzot told The Dallas Morning News.

In a series of notes to the court Friday, the 12 jurors said they were “hopelessly deadlocked 11 to one” over the case. It was not clear what verdict the majority of jurors supported. Jones initially resisted declaring a mistrial, repeatedly ordering the jury to continue deliberation.

After the decision, family of the women Chemirmir is accused of killing spoke outside the courtroom, which they’d been prohibited from entering during the trial as a COVID-19 precaution. They expressed frustration with the mistrial, anger with the juror they saw as a hold out against conviction and determination to get a different outcome the next time around.

“We are devastated at the outcome of this trial,” said Loren Adair-Smith, the daughter of Phyllis Payne. “We are sickened that we have to come back and hear the same evidence again.”

Chemirmir’s attorneys rested their case without calling any witnesses or presenting evidence, and he didn’t testify. They dismissed the evidence against their client as “quantity over quality” and asserted that prosecutors had not proved Chemirmir’s guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

Following the mistrial, defense attorney Kobby Warren said his client maintains his innocence and disputed the idea of the trial being derailed by a “rogue juror.”

“It was all circumstantial,” he said of the case against Chemirmir.

Chemirmir was arrested in March 2018 after 91-year-old Mary Annis Bartel said a man forced his way into her apartment at an independent living community for seniors in the Dallas suburb of Plano.

When police tracked Chemirmir to his nearby apartment following the attack on Bartel, he was holding jewelry and cash. Documents in a large red jewelry box police say he had just thrown away led them to a Dallas home, where Harris was dead in her bedroom, lipstick smeared on her pillow.

After his arrest, authorities announced they’d begin reviewing hundreds of deaths, signaling the possibility that a serial killer had been stalking older people. Over the following years, the number of people Chemirmir was accused of killing grew.

For the families of most of the women he’s been charged with killing, they learned months or years after their loved one’s death that authorities believed they’d been killed. Those families had puzzled over the suddenness of their older but otherwise healthy and active loved ones’ deaths, and in many cases, filed police reports when jewelry was found missing after their deaths.

Bartel died in 2020 but jurors heard from her during the trial through a taped deposition. She said she did not remember details of the appearance of the man who attacked her but said she knew she was in mortal danger the minute she opened her door.

“My eyes were just fixated on these green rubber gloves that I saw. ... I knew instantly when I saw those two green rubber gloves, number one, I should not have opened the door, number two, my life was in grave danger,” Bartel said on the video.



She said that she tried to push the door shut but was overpowered. “He said: ‘Don’t fight me, lie on the bed,’” Bartel said.

Bartel described a pillow being smashed into her face and her attacker “using all his weight to keep me from breathing.” Chemirmir was charged with attempted capital murder in the attack on Bartel.

Jurors saw surveillance video from a Walmart showing that Harris and Chemirmir were at the store at the same time, just hours before she was found dead.

Most of the victims were killed at independent living communities for older people, where Chemirmir allegedly forced his way into apartments or posed as a handyman.

Harris’ son-in-law, Richard Rinehart, testified that the jewelry and jewelry box found in the trash when Chemirmir was arrested belonged to his mother-in-law.

Evidence presented showed that Chemirmir also had numerous \$2 bills at the time. Rinehart testified that his mother-in-law loved giving them as gifts. Police also said Chemirmir was arrested with a set of keys that opened the front doors of Harris’ home.

Jurors also heard about the killing of 87-year-old Mary Brooks, who was found dead in her Richardson home in January 2018. Hers was one of the 18 Chemirmir has been charged with.

Prosecutor Glen Fitzmartin said that Brooks’ death had originally been called a natural death, but after an investigation following the arrest of Chemirmir, the medical examiner changed the cause of death to homicide.

Fitzmartin said that Chemirmir also followed Brooks home from the same Walmart Harris was at before her death. Her daughter, Ann Brooks, testified that after her mother’s death, her mother’s safe was missing, as was most of her jewelry, including wedding rings and a coral necklace she always wore.

Chemirmir, who immigrated to the U.S. from Kenya, became a permanent U.S. resident in 2007.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Indicted: Ga. officers; music festival death</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/entertainment-music-crime-georgia-atlanta-a6d66a34bd50bb16f866f404332db6e8">https://apnews.com/article/entertainment-music-crime-georgia-atlanta-a6d66a34bd50bb16f866f404332db6e8</a>
GIST	<p>MCDONOUGH, Ga. (AP) — A grand jury in Georgia has indicted five law enforcement officers in the 2019 death of a naked man who was pressed on the ground outside of a music festival, a prosecutor says.</p> <p>The Henry County Grand Jury issued the indictment involving multiple charges, including malice murder, on Friday after hearing two days of testimony from witnesses, Henry County Assistant District Attorney Megan Matteucci said.</p> <p>Warrants for the officers’ arrests will be issued next week, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported. It was not known if the officers had lawyers who could speak on their behalf.</p> <p>The indictments stem from an incident in September 2019 outside of Atlanta Motor Speedway as it hosted the Imagine Music Festival, Matteucci said in a news release.</p> <p>Fernando Rodriguez, 24, died of asphyxiation after he was handcuffed and pressed to the ground while the officers waited for an ambulance, according to Matteucci’s statement.</p> <p>Henry County police officers Robert Butera and Quinton Phillips, along with Hampton police officers Mason Lewis, Marcus Stroud and Gregory Bowlden have each been charged with one count of malice murder, two counts of felony murder and one count of aggravated assault, Matteucci said. In addition, each officer has been charged with violating their oath of office.</p>

	<p>The incident began when a 911 caller reported a naked man walking outside of the festival, the newspaper previously reported. Body camera footage shows the man, later identified as Rodriguez, walking in the middle of the road, confused and uncooperative but not combative.</p> <p>The officers yelled at him to stop and when Rodriguez continued walking, one of the officers stunned him with a Taser, the footage showed. Rodriguez then fell to his back in the street. Footage also showed the officers repeatedly tell him to roll over, then stun Rodriguez several more times when he does not comply.</p> <p>The officers eventually forced him to roll over, and multiple officers knelt on his arms, neck and back to keep him restrained, according to authorities.</p> <p>In a wrongful death suit filed by Rodriguez's family, the lawsuit contends the officers should have given the man medical aid instead of continuing to restrain him. Instead, the lawsuit said, they waited for an ambulance to arrive.</p> <p>Rodriguez's family ultimately accepted a \$3 million settlement from the Hampton Police Department. The family is still pursuing legal action against the Henry County Police Department, the newspaper reported.</p> <p>Rodriguez died in a hospital two days after the incident. His death was ruled a homicide by a medical examiner.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Crime against disabled people rising</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://abcnews.go.com/US/crime-disabled-people-rising-advocates/story?id=81210410">https://abcnews.go.com/US/crime-disabled-people-rising-advocates/story?id=81210410</a>
GIST	<p>Disabled people are disproportionately victims of violent crime and victimization in the United States, according to <a href="#">new data released by the Bureau of Justice Statistics</a>. And the frequency of these crimes is also increasing, according to the data, though activists don't seem to know why.</p> <p>The data shows that from 2017-2019 disabled people accounted for 26% of nonfatal violent crimes, even though they make up only 12% of the population and are victims of violence at almost four times the rate of non-disabled people.</p> <p>For disabled women, the disparity is even greater and the prospect of victimization seems almost inevitable to some, activists say. The data also shows the ongoing prevalence of domestic and intimate partner violence against disabled women, and activists say it showcases the failings of a system that wasn't built for the well-being of disabled people.</p> <p>Stefanie Lyn Kaufman-Mthimkhulu, the executive director of non-profit <a href="#">disability advocacy group Project LETS</a>, is a survivor of sexual violence herself and was sexually assaulted by a friend as a senior in college. She said she didn't report the 2017 incident partly because she thought her history in psychiatric institutions and her mental illness would have made it difficult to hold her abuser accountable.</p> <p>"I've seen [the legal system] tear people apart," Kaufman-Mthimkhulu said. "And I don't think I could have handled it. That's the reality that we're up against, particularly for folks who have psychiatric histories, who are intellectually disabled."</p> <p>Now, she works as a disability justice organizer in order to help try to curb attacks on disabled people like herself.</p> <p>It's an uphill battle, according to activists -- with a lack of research into violence at institutions, a mistrust in law enforcement among the community, poverty and overrepresentation in the criminal justice system.</p> <p><b>Ableism in our systems and communities</b></p> <p>The BJS reports that the rate of violent crime against disabled women -- 49.4 per 1,000 people -- is higher than it is for disabled men and non-disabled men and women. For disabled men, that rate is 42.7 per 1,000. For all non-disabled people, it falls dramatically: 12.3 per 1,000 people.</p>

Over the years that rate has risen for disabled people -- from 2009 to 2019, the rate of violent victimization rose from 28.8 per 1,000 disabled people to 46.2.

In a 2015 report from the U.S. Department of Human Health Services, researchers found that disabled women are more likely to experience violence or abuse compared to non-disabled women and are more likely to experience violence or abuse by a current or former partner.

Activists say that ableism -- the discrimination or bias against disabled people -- is at the root of this disparity and that misogyny puts women in greater danger.

"A lot of people don't actually see [disabled people as] full human beings that are capable of autonomous decision making," Kaufman-Mthimkhulu said. "We've all been conditioned in a way that allows for this belief that disabled people are inferior, are weaker than others. That we should be grateful for any form of attention, or love, even if that comes in the form of abuse."

Not only are disabled people seen by some as "less than," but activists at the [National Coalition of Latinxs with Disabilities](#) -- or CNLD in Spanish -- also say that various forms of ableism affect the social, political and economic standing of disabled people in the U.S.

### **Reporting shortcomings**

In the report, BJS researchers and law enforcement agencies concede that the number of crimes actually committed against disabled people is likely to be higher than what is reported.

BJS cites a number of issues in its data collection which is based on the annual self-reported survey response collection followed by interviews hosted by the U.S. Census Bureau. The BJS says this research lacks input from institutionalized people, 54% of whom have a disability, and the interviewing and surveying methods that contributed to this dataset may be inaccessible to get accurate or full responses from disabled people.

"The data focuses on individuals who are not institutionalized, and there is a lot of violence that is being experienced by those who are institutionalized that's not being acknowledged or investigated," Torres-Gerald said.

Though recent research into this topic is limited, one 1994 study from the Behavioral Interventions journal found that about 82% of all cases of abuse and neglect of adults with developmental disabilities were carried out in institutions or group homes and that people who "were unlikely or unable to report or resist the abuse were the most common victims."

The data also did not break down the differences between racial, ethnic and gender groups.

Crime reporting statistics law enforcement agencies have also proven to be inaccurate due to underreporting, according to the Office for Victims of Crime. Barriers to financial or physical independence, as well as social and economic injustices keep crimes against the disabled in the dark, activists say.

### **Challenges for women and the poor**

It's also often difficult for disabled people, particularly women, to leave abusive care or to report abuse, according to [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention researchers](#).

For instance, disabled people may be financially or physically dependent on an intimate partner. They also may not be able to report because they can't communicate or are unable to access a phone, activists say.

The National Disability Institute found that disabled people can often be limited in either their ability to work or ability to get a job due to inaccessible workplaces -- and are more likely to experience poverty than non-disabled people.

"In order for people with disabilities to receive any type of services either Medicaid services they have to be means-tested. so they have to live in perpetual [poverty]," said Leonor Vanik, a co-founder of CNLD. "They have to be low income in order to receive any services."

If they rely on Supplemental Security Income, [there are limits on their income and restrictions on their financial assets](#): disabled people often can't own more than \$2,000 in countable cash at a time in order to receive benefits, [the Social Security Administration \(SSA\) website states](#), leaving them in a position of being financially dependent on others or in poverty.

And if they are married, they may be disallowed of disability benefits like Social Security benefits and Medicaid due to their partner's income, according [to the SSA](#).

But there are other forces of inequality at play as well, including the people to whom disabled people would report crimes.

#### **Mistrust in law enforcement by some**

A mistrust in law enforcement also keeps some from reporting to police, according to Kaufman-Mthimkhulu. Disabled people are often over-criminalized and over-represented in detention facilities; in 2016, nearly 2 in 5 state and federal prisoners had at least one disability, according [to the BJS](#). In 2017, a study [by Cornell University found that](#) disabled people were also more likely to be arrested when interacting with police than their non-disabled counterparts.

And, according to research by [disability research organization the Ruderman Family Foundation](#), almost half of people killed by police have some kind of disability.

"We really have to like ask ourselves, what is driving that desire for power?" said Kaufman-Mthimkhulu. "We have a lot of work to do as a collective society to move away from the violence that has been embedded in each of us. ... We need to see these things reflected in policy, we need to see these things happen on a societal level."

For some activists, these findings aren't shocking -- but they are a warning sign that systemic and interpersonal violence against disabled people go hand-in-hand. Without accountability for hurdles and red tape against the financial and social success of disabled people, activists say.

"[Lawmakers must focus on] increasing funding and community interventions to better support and create services for survivors that can help build trust within a community for survivors to know that there's a place for them to go and receive the support they need," Catalina Galvan, CNLD's treasurer said.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 South Sound homeless camp link to crimes</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/possible-removal-south-sound-homeless-encampment-after-crimes-found-linked-it/I7WX7NI7YFD7LJ74KWIF07U5TM/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/possible-removal-south-sound-homeless-encampment-after-crimes-found-linked-it/I7WX7NI7YFD7LJ74KWIF07U5TM/</a>
GIST	<p>FIFE, Wash. — A South Sound homeless encampment could be removed after multiple crimes were discovered to be associated with the location, according to the Pierce County Sheriff's Office.</p> <p>The encampment is in the city of Fife, but also borders the city of Tacoma and unincorporated Pierce County. Located on property owned by WSDOT, law enforcement recovered 40 stolen vehicles from the encampment.</p> <p>Multiple arrests have also been made at the encampment, including six people with felony warrants from Washington State Department of Corrections. Another person was also arrested for "felony possession of a firearm" after deputies found a shotgun, according to deputies. Drug trafficking has also been frequent, according to deputies.</p>

	<p>“We’ve also had several reports of gunshots fired in the area,” Sgt. Jason Youngman with the Pierce County Sheriff’s Office said in a video posted by the agency. “(Fife Police) report that it’s almost a nightly event to hear gunshots coming out of here.”</p> <p>“We have DOT property inside our city that’s moving towards construction for the 167 expansion from Puyallup to the Port of Tacoma,” Aaron Gardner, an assistant chief with the Fife Police Department, said in the video. “We have numerous individuals that have been living on state land.”</p> <p>A 72-hour notice/order to leave the property was posted by WSDOT on Nov. 12. Anyone still on the property could be arrested, according to a deputy with the Pierce County Sheriff’s Office.</p> <p>Several residents in Fife tell KIRO 7 they hope those who need help get assistance, but also agree that criminal activity should not be tolerated.</p> <p>“It’s good they’re cleaning things up, but on the other hand, they need to look on the other side and make sure what they’re cleaning up isn’t just a bunch of people who are just trying to make it,” Mike Smith said while standing blocks away from the encampment. “Try to help them out more. Get rid of the bad and try to help out those who really need it... There’s a lot of homeless (people) out there who aren’t doing bad, who are literally sleeping in tents trying to get back up to where they were.”</p> <p>“There’s a big difference between struggling and trying to take over,” Isaac Fogalele said while standing by Smith. “That’s just crazy, bizarre, and it’s kind of good that they found it, you know? Make the environment more safe out here (in Fife).”</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/20 San Francisco stores: looting, vandalism</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/local/unacceptable-sf-mayor-police-chief-respond-after-looting-vandalism-in-union-square/2737559/">https://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/local/unacceptable-sf-mayor-police-chief-respond-after-looting-vandalism-in-union-square/2737559/</a>
GIST	<p>San Francisco Mayor London Breed and police chief Bill Scott said Saturday that there will be changes in Union Square after looting and vandalism took place at several retail stores in the area Friday night.</p> <p>Videos posted on social media showed a night that turned out of control in Union Square. One video showed the Louis Vuitton store being looted as people were running away with as much merchandise as they could carry.</p> <p>“I heard that on the news this morning. I’m really sad about it it’s a beautiful city,” said Walnut Creek resident Ann Rivers.</p> <p>It was a much different picture Saturday as the holiday ice rink and decorations reminded shoppers of the holiday season.</p> <p>But some businesses boarded up windows and it reminded them of the chaos that unfolded Friday night.</p> <p>Workers spent the day repairing broken glass.</p> <p>Former San Francisco mayor Willie Brown was in Union Square and had some words to say.</p> <p>“I think it’s horrible,” he said. “I think it has to be something seriously done about Union Square if this is going to be the shopping district.”</p> <p>Police said they arrested eight people, including a person in car who they said was armed.</p> <p>Officials added that a learned a number of businesses in different parts of the city were also hit, including a cannibas dispensary and a Walgreens.</p>

	<p>During a press conference Saturday, Mayor Breed and Scott promised action following the incidents.</p> <p>“We will flood this area with police officers for the foreseeable future. As you walk around today you see police officers in Union Square but we’re not going to stop at Union Square,” Scott said.</p> <p>Breed said that changes might also be coming for drivers near Union Square in response to the violence.</p> <p>“We are not going to let people turn into an ugly city this is a beautiful city. We will protect this city,” she said.</p> <p>Many shoppers said they are still trying to make sense of it.</p> <p>Police said they expect more arrests.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Looters pillage Calif. Nordstrom in 1 minute</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/dozens-looters-target-nordstrom-store-walnut-creek-california-rcna6265">https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/dozens-looters-target-nordstrom-store-walnut-creek-california-rcna6265</a>
GIST	<p>Dozens of looters descended on a Nordstrom store and stole merchandise Saturday night in a raid that was over within a minute, police in Walnut Creek, California said.</p> <p>Approximately 80 people rushed into the store in the city’s Broadway Plaza, a spokesperson for the Walnut Creek Police Department told NBC News.</p> <p>They said that one employee was pepper sprayed, and two others were punched and kicked. All three sustained minor injuries, and were treated and released at the scene, they added.</p> <p>The suspects were in and out of the store, which was open at the time, within a minute, the spokesperson said, adding that an undetermined amount of merchandise was taken.</p> <p>Jodi Hernandez, a reporter with NBC Bay Area, was near the store when the raid took place. She tweeted that about 25 cars blocked the street during the incident.</p> <p>People in the cars rushed into the store and jumped back into their cars before speeding away with goods, she said.</p> <p>Hernandez said it appeared that most looters got away. <a href="#">A video</a> she took at the scene showed police officers arresting and handcuffing some of the alleged looters. An officer can also be seen pointing a weapon at one of the drivers.</p> <p>NBC News has reached out Nordstrom for comment on the incident.</p> <p>Brett Barrett, who works at a nearby restaurant, told NBC Bay Area he saw 50 to 80 people in ski masks carrying crow bars during the incident.</p> <p>“I had to start locking the front door, the back door,” he said. “You never know, they could have come right in here.”</p> <p>Three people have been arrested in connection with the incident so far, police said. Two were arrested immediately for robbery, conspiracy, burglary and possession of stolen property. One of those two had a firearm and is facing a weapons charge, police added. A third person was found not long after the incident and is also facing charges.</p> <p>Walnut Creek Police also confirmed that the incident was not linked to a series of protests that have taken place across the country over the non-guilty verdict in the trial of Kyle Rittenhouse.</p>



HEADLINE	<b>11/21 Hamas gunman kills 1 Jerusalem Old City</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-jerusalem-israel-police-5230987bd667588e0c04b97c2277814d">https://apnews.com/article/middle-east-jerusalem-israel-police-5230987bd667588e0c04b97c2277814d</a>
GIST	<p>JERUSALEM (AP) — A Hamas militant on Sunday opened fire in Jerusalem’s Old City, killing one Israeli and wounding four others before he was fatally shot by Israeli police.</p> <p>It was not immediately clear whether Hamas, an Islamic militant group sworn to Israel’s destruction, had ordered the attack or whether one of its members had acted alone. Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, has largely adhered to a cease-fire with Israel since an 11-day war last May and shootings attacks inside the Old City are rare.</p> <p>Police said the attack took place near an entrance to a contested flashpoint shrine known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary. Violence surrounding the site, which is considered holy by both faiths, has triggered previous rounds of fighting, including the war last May.</p> <p>Israeli officials said Eliyahu Kay, a 26-year-old immigrant from South Africa, was killed in the shooting. Kay had recently worked at the Western Wall, the holiest site where Jews can pray. One of the four people wounded was in serious condition.</p> <p>Police identified the attacker as a 42-year-old Palestinian from east Jerusalem. Palestinian media identified him as Fadi Abu Shkhaidem, a teacher at a nearby high school.</p> <p>In Gaza, Hamas praised the attack as a “heroic operation” and said Abu Shkhaidem was one of its members. However, the group stopped short of claiming responsibility for the attack.</p> <p>“Our people’s resistance will continue to be legitimate by all means and tools against the Zionist occupier until our desired goals are achieved and the occupation is expelled from our holy sites and all of our lands,” spokesman Abdel Latif al-Qanou said.</p> <p>Hamas has fought four wars against Israel since it took control of Gaza from the rival Fatah group in 2007.</p> <p>Israel, along with Egypt, have together maintained a stifling blockade on Gaza since the Hamas takeover, causing great harm to the territory’s already weak economy. Since the May war, Israel and Hamas have conducted indirect talks through Egyptian mediators aimed at cementing a long-term cease-fire.</p> <p>Israel, along with the U.S. and European Union, consider Hamas a terrorist group. On Friday, Britain said it also intends to ban Hamas as a terrorist group and would no longer differentiate between its political and military wings.</p> <p>Israel’s figurehead president, Isaac Herzog, called on other countries to follow suit as he landed in Britain on Sunday for an official visit. “The fact the terrorist was from Hamas ‘political wing’ compels the international community to recognise it as a terror group,” Herzog tweeted.</p> <p>Dimiter Tzantchev, the EU ambassador-designate to Israel, condemned “this senseless attack against civilians. Violence is never the answer.”</p> <p>Sunday’s incident was the second of its kind in Jerusalem’s historic Old City in recent days. On Wednesday, a Palestinian teen was fatally shot after stabbing two Israeli border police.</p> <p>Palestinians have carried out dozens of stabbing, shooting and car-ramming attacks targeting Israeli civilians and security personnel in recent years. Palestinians and rights groups contend some of the alleged car-rammings were accidents and accuse Israel of using excessive force.</p> <p>But shootings around Jerusalem’s Old City and its holy sites are relatively rare, and Israel maintains a sizeable security presence in the area.</p>



	<p>Israel captured east Jerusalem, including the Old City and its Christian, Muslim and Jewish holy sites, along with the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the 1967 Mideast war. It later annexed east Jerusalem in a move unrecognized by most of the international community.</p> <p>The Palestinians seek the occupied West Bank and Gaza for a future independent state, with east Jerusalem as its capital.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/19 Mexico staggering drug gangs' violence</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/11/19/mexico-zacatecas-bodies-drug-cartels/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/11/19/mexico-zacatecas-bodies-drug-cartels/</a>
GIST	<p>MEXICO CITY — In the latest sign of Mexico's staggering levels of violence, the bodies of 10 men were found <a href="#">hanging from a bridge</a> on a federal highway in northwest Zacatecas state. The bodies were a sign of the brutal battles between rival drug gangs that have bloodied the state.</p> <p>The men apparently were kidnapped from the rural town of San Pedro Piedra Gorda, about 20 miles from the capital city of Zacatecas, according to news reports. They were tortured and hung from a bridge, and then their assailants opened fire on the bodies, according to the reports.</p> <p>One of the bodies fell to the ground before authorities arrived at the scene.</p> <p>Stunned residents of San Pedro Piedra Gorda traveled to the bridge to try to identify their relatives. "They say that my brother-in-law is there, but we want to see if my father-in-law is, too," one man told a police officer, according to the Jornada newspaper. Three women nearby hugged and wept, it said.</p> <p>In a statement, the Zacatecas public safety agency said that an "intensive operation" was underway to find those responsible for the killings. It said that authorities would release more information as it became available.</p> <p>Drug groups quietly cultivated marijuana in Zacatecas for decades. But in the past few years, the state has <a href="#">become a battleground</a>, with rival narcotics groups shooting or beheading their enemies.</p> <p>In July, two men were discovered crucified in the Zacatecas town of Morelos, in what was seen as an attack by organized crime. Earlier this week, the bodies of three policemen — including a local police director in Loreto city in Zacatecas — were found just days after they were kidnapped by armed men, local media reported.</p> <p>On Friday, the public safety agency Secretaría de Seguridad Pública Zacatecas said that it was investigating reports of two trash bags containing human remains in the city of Fresnillo.</p> <p>The Sinaloa and Jalisco cartels, as well as smaller groups, are fighting to control the crucial highways in Zacatecas used to send drugs to the U.S. border.</p> <p>Analysts say drug groups use the <a href="#">grisly tactic</a> of hanging bodies from bridges to intimidate their enemies. The tactic first appeared more than a decade ago. It had declined in the past few years, but there are new signs of gruesome public violence in some areas, such as Zacatecas.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/19 New Civil Rights unit Southern District NY</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/19/nyregion/damian-williams-civil-rights.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/19/nyregion/damian-williams-civil-rights.html</a>
GIST	<p>Citing a rise in hate attacks, Damian Williams, the new U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced the creation of a civil rights unit in the office's criminal division on Friday at a ceremony at the Harlem Armory, signaling a new focus for one of the country's most powerful prosecutor's offices.</p>

“White supremacist groups are on the march,” said [Mr. Williams](#), the first Black person to hold the post in the office’s 232-year history. “Antisemitism is on the march. Anti-Asian violence is on the march. Abuse of the most vulnerable in our society is on the march.”

Enforcement of civil rights violations in the office has largely been handled through civil lawsuits rather than criminal charges. But at a time when calls for a reconsideration of the way the justice system confronts issues of race and discrimination have grown louder, Mr. Williams said creating a civil rights unit within the office’s criminal division would elevate the work and “make us more effective.”

Mr. Williams, who was [confirmed by the Senate](#) last month, assumed his post roughly 17 months after the murder of George Floyd by a Minnesota police officer [and mass protests](#) that followed in New York and across the nation calling for an end to racism in the criminal justice system.

In recent years, the office has brought notable criminal civil-rights prosecutions, like the [conviction of a Rikers corrections officer](#) who fatally beat a seriously ill prisoner while other guards held him down; and a [2019 federal hate crimes case](#) against a man accused of stabbing five Hasidic Jews — one victim, a rabbi, later died — during a Hanukkah celebration in Monsey, N.Y.

But much of the office’s highest-profile civil rights work has been handled through lawsuits. In 2014, for example, the office investigated New York City over widespread civil rights violations in the treatment of adolescent inmates [at Rikers Island](#), which led to a settlement and a court-appointed monitor.

Mr. Williams said on Friday that other priorities would be gun violence and reconnecting with the communities that his office serves. He said he would be “equally relentless” in prosecuting financial crimes.

“I use the word equally, by the way, on purpose,” he added, “because I don’t believe that there should be one justice system for white-collar crime and another justice system for blue-collar crime.”

Mr. Williams’s remarks, amounting to a statement of principles and purpose, were unusual for a newly appointed U.S. attorney, although many who have held the post in recent decades have delivered speeches to community and business groups and spoken at news conferences to announce new cases.

Sometimes called “the Sovereign District” for its long-asserted independence from Washington, the U.S. attorney’s office for the Southern District has handled some of the nation’s most complex and high-profile cases, including terrorism, financial crimes and prosecutions that reached former President [Donald J. Trump's inner circle](#).

The office was wracked by turmoil during the Trump presidency. Two of its previous four top prosecutors were fired by the Trump administration. The New York Times has also reported that the Trump-era attorney general, William P. Barr, and other officials had [tried to interfere](#) with crucial Southern District cases and investigations.

Mr. Williams’s predecessor, [Audrey Strauss](#), became the acting U.S. attorney in Manhattan last year after a chaotic 24 hours in which Mr. Trump [fired her predecessor, Geoffrey S. Berman, after Mr. Barr had tried unsuccessfully to replace him with a political ally](#).

Ms. Strauss, Mr. Berman and Joon H. Kim were among the former U.S. attorneys in attendance on Friday, along with Preet Bharara, who [was fired](#) from the post in March 2017 when he refused to quit.

Saluting them each, Mr. Williams made it clear in his comments that he, too, would defend the office. Citing Mr. Berman, Mr. Williams said, “When the hour demanded true courage and independence and the demonstration of what it means to be a Southern District of New York prosecutor, he showed all of America what that meant.”

	<p>At the ceremony, Attorney General Merrick B. Garland spoke about the Justice Department’s founding in the midst of Reconstruction, and the role it had played in confronting the Ku Klux Klan, and later on, protecting voting rights and prosecuting civil rights violations and hate crimes. He also praised Mr. Williams, a onetime law clerk of Mr. Garland’s when he was a judge, as a wise and humble colleague.</p> <p>And he noted that today, prosecutors confront a range of threats, from white-collar crime to violent crime to domestic violent extremism.</p> <p>“Those threats, if left unanswered, will also undermine our democratic and economic institutions as well as our citizens’ support for the rule of law,” he warned.</p> <p>In choosing to hold his oath-swearing ceremony at the Harlem Armory, Mr. Williams underscored the Southern District’s connection to the historic building, which was once the home of the Army’s distinguished 369th Infantry Regiment, a regiment of thousands of Black soldiers formed in 1916 who fought in World War I and became known as the <a href="#">Harlem Hellfighters</a>.</p> <p>The Hellfighters were commanded by Colonel William Hayward, a white lawyer who in 1921 was appointed as the U.S. attorney for the Southern District. In his early weeks in office, he hired James C. Thomas Jr., who had fought with the Hellfighters, as the office’s first Black assistant U.S. attorney.</p> <p>“The historical symbolism is amazing,” said Senator Chuck Schumer of New York, the Democratic majority leader who had recommended Mr. Williams to the White House for the prosecutor’s post and who also spoke at the event.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/19 Indicted: 3 cops violated teen’s civil rights</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/19/us/politics/officers-excessive-force-stomp.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/19/us/politics/officers-excessive-force-stomp.html</a>
GIST	<p>A group of police officers approach a wooden shed in a snow-covered patch of South Jersey, yelling, “Get out! Come on out!” to whoever is hiding inside as a police dog whimpers nearby.</p> <p>Moments later, the officers drag their quarry, a Black teenager suspected of stealing a car, out of the shed and throw him face down on the ground. As they handcuff him behind his back, one officer steps on his head, pushing it into the snow.</p> <p>“What did you do?” an officer asks, as a second one steps up and kicks snow in the teenager’s face. At another point in the encounter, which was captured on police body-camera footage, a different officer puts his foot on the teenager’s head.</p> <p>On Friday, two current members of the Ewing Township Police Department in New Jersey and a retired lieutenant were charged in a federal indictment with violating the teenager’s civil rights by using unreasonable force in the incident. All three defendants are white.</p> <p>The three officers’ actions were not only unwarranted, according to the indictment, but also unnecessary because other officers who were arresting the teenager had the matter under control and had not asked for assistance.</p> <p>Two of the three men charged in connection with the incident — Michael Delahanty, the retired lieutenant, and Officer Matthew Przemieniecki — face up to 10 years in prison if convicted. The third, Officer Justin Ubry, faces up to a year in prison.</p> <p>Each of the defendants was released on a \$50,000 bond after an initial court appearance on Friday. They are prohibited from leaving the country, and they were ordered to surrender their firearms by Monday. They are scheduled to be arraigned on the charges next week.</p> <p>Eric Marcy, a lawyer for Mr. Ubry, said his client had done nothing wrong.</p>

“He’s a good police officer, he has a good reputation in the community, and his actions do not constitute a violation of federal criminal civil rights laws,” Mr. Marcy said in an interview.

A lawyer for Officer Przemieniecki did not respond to a request for comment. Mr. Delahanty’s lawyer could not immediately be reached.

The duty statuses of Officers Przemieniecki and Ubry could not be confirmed on Friday. The township’s mayor, Bert Steinmann, and the Police Department did not respond to requests for comment.

But Mr. Steinmann told NJ.com on Friday that while they had remained on active duty while federal investigators examined the matter, “obviously that’s going to change today.”

The incident that prompted the charges happened on a frigid morning in January 2018 as officers in Ewing Township, a Trenton suburb, responded to a report of a stolen car.

The vehicle had been in an accident when the officers found it, and they saw the driver run off. A short while later, they found him in the shed.

According to the indictment, Mr. Delahanty was the first officer who stepped on the teenager’s head in the body-camera footage, [which was first made public by The Trentonian](#). Officer Przemieniecki kicked snow into the teenager’s face several times, and Officer Ubry did the same, the indictment says. Officer Przemieniecki was the second officer who stepped on the teenager’s head, the indictment says.

“Relax,” one officer can be heard saying in the video, adding a coarse insult to the admonition as other officers search the teenager — who has only been identified as being from Burlington, N.J. — before letting him get up. It was unclear whether he was injured — and if so, how seriously — in the incident.

The accusations against the officers were first raised by Lalena Lamson, a retired Ewing Township police officer, in a [whistle-blower lawsuit](#) she filed against the township in 2019 alleging various acts of wrongdoing in the department, according to The Trentonian. The F.B.I. subsequently opened its investigation.

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HEADLINE	11/20 Fentanyl’s mounting death toll: poison
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/20/nyregion/fentanyl-opioid-deaths.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/20/nyregion/fentanyl-opioid-deaths.html</a>
GIST	<p>Dark heroin cut with so much white powdered fentanyl that it’s known on the street as “gray.” Cocaine laced so frequently with fentanyl that club DJs stock anti-overdose medication. Fake prescription pain pills that are in fact all fentanyl.</p> <p>The synthetic opioid fentanyl, a legal prescription pain medication, is now a black market commodity blasting through the street drug marketplace. Cheap and up to 100 times more powerful than naturally derived opioids, it is also lethal.</p> <p>Behind the trend is a growing body count: In the 12-month period that ended in April, more than 100,000 Americans, a record number, died from overdoses, according to preliminary data from the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <a href="#">The majority of the deaths were linked to synthetic opioids like fentanyl.</a></p> <p>In New York City, the majority of autopsies of overdose deaths now reveal that fentanyl was involved, including that of <a href="#">Michael K. Williams</a>, the actor found dead <a href="#">in his Brooklyn apartment</a>.</p> <p>It is spliced into party drugs where it can be consumed unwittingly, as it was by <a href="#">six people killed by a single batch of laced cocaine</a> on Long Island this summer.</p> <p>While the mounting deaths show the devastating consequence of fentanyl’s seep, it is less widely understood why the drug has mushroomed. And why so many illicit products — from fentanyl-laced</p>

cocaine and crystal methamphetamines, to marijuana sprayed with fentanyl, to faux prescription pills that are in fact fentanyl, colored and stamped to resemble a brand-name drug — now contain it.

The spread of fentanyl has been stealthy, steady and deadly, according to interviews with nine people involved in the sale of illegal drugs in New York, where much of the country's fentanyl enters the street market, as well as law enforcement and addiction experts. The identities and backgrounds of the nine people were confirmed by The Times through their criminal records, lawyers and addiction counselors.

People who intermittently use stimulants like cocaine, for example, have low tolerances for such powerful synthetic opioids, said Dr. Chinazo O. Cunningham, the executive deputy commissioner of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

In 2015, just 17 of the city's overdose deaths involved cocaine and fentanyl, without heroin; that number rose to 183 in 2019, the last year for which data was available, according to the Health Department.

"These are no longer street drugs," said John Tavalacci, the executive vice president and chief operating officer of Odyssey House, a drug rehabilitation center in New York City. "This is poison."

### **'With fentanyl, the hair on our necks stood up'**

Fentanyl is the [third wave of an opioid epidemic](#) that began in the 1990s with prescription pills, followed by exploding heroin use.

Now communities are struggling under an onslaught of fentanyl. The reasons are multilayered: As pharmaceutical companies have tightened the tap on prescription pain pills following a raft of legal losses for their role in causing the opioid epidemic, the pills have become scarce on the black market. Addicts have turned to fentanyl for their fix.

To profit off the situation, cartels and small-time manufacturers have flooded in caches of imitation pills — fentanyl tablets mimicking prescription brands. In September, the United States Drug Enforcement Administration issued a public safety alert: More than 40 percent of black-market prescription pills are actually counterfeits laced with fentanyl.

"Like a wolf in sheep's clothing, these pills are lethal," Ray Donovan, then the D.E.A.'s special agent in charge of the New York division, said in a statement.

As borders were closed to thwart the coronavirus, cartels created stockpiles, leading to a spike, said Bridget G. Brennan, New York City's special narcotics prosecutor.

At the same time, several drug dealers said in interviews, domestic dealers turned to fentanyl as a cheap way to bulk out thin wares.

As lockdowns lifted and border crossings began to normalize, fentanyl flooded in. In just the first six months of 2021, the special prosecutor's office confiscated more than in any previous year.

Since 2018, fentanyl seizures by the New York D.E.A. have tripled, as confiscated heroin fell by more than half. The drug agency in New York says it has taken 1,099 kilograms of fentanyl off the street so far in 2021, compared with just 434 kilograms of heroin.

Enforcement is on high alert: Whenever fentanyl circulation goes up, Ms. Brennan said, overdose deaths inevitably do too.

"With fentanyl, the hair on our necks stood up," Ms. Brennan said.

### **'Stepping on' drugs with fentanyl**

Fentanyl was first synthesized in 1959 as a substitute for morphine. The synthetic opioid is prescribed to treat pain, including for cancer patients. It is often administered in a patch; abusers figured out how to chew or smoke the patches or adhere strips of them to their gums.

When he first began experimenting with fentanyl, Tim, a former dealer from Newburgh, N.Y., said others taught him how to boil the patches to extract the fentanyl, then inject it intravenously. Soon he was adding fentanyl powder to the drugs he sold. Like nearly all dealers interviewed for this story, he requested that his last name be withheld because he was discussing illegal activity.

Today the drug is far simpler to obtain. Fentanyl is primarily manufactured in China, which sends it or the raw ingredients, called precursors, on cargo ships to Mexico, where it is finished by cartels, according to Ben Westhoff, the author of “Fentanyl, Inc. How Rogue Chemists Created the Deadliest Wave of the Opioid Epidemic.” It is widely available on the “dark web,” an untraceable online network, and shipped in the mail.

Fentanyl’s spread has been pushed by the profit imperative, according to interviews with dealers: On each leg of the journey of a drug like heroin or cocaine, from cartel to end user, sellers often cut the pure product with cheap powders that are similar in appearance, a process known as “stepping on” the drug. Once it was things like baby formula; today, it is likely to be fentanyl.

There is no quality control: A street dealer might cut fentanyl into cocaine that already contains it, creating a lethal dose.

In interviews, dealers described lacing as completely ad hoc. One said she measured out fentanyl with a McDonald’s ice cream spoon, leveled with a playing card. More than one dealer did not measure at all, spritzing liquid fentanyl onto baking sheets of marijuana, creating a once-rare concoction that some dealers say is increasingly requested.

Tim, the dealer from Newburgh, said overdoses were almost a perk. Once word got out, he said, his phone would light up with users seeking extra-strong fentanyl, an experience several other dealers said they shared.

“That means it was so good, this person dropped on it,” said Tim, 32. “So trust me, you want to come and get what I have.” In addiction recovery at Odyssey House, he said he is now filled with shame.

“The destruction I caused, I think, how could I have done that?” Tim said. “It started off with fentanyl.” While in prison for crimes related to dealing drugs, Corey F. Russell, 50, saw so many overdoses on contraband fentanyl that he emerged as an anti-fentanyl activist.

Mr. Russell, known as Ja’Corey, now warns old customers and pleads with former associates not to lace their drugs.

“That fentanyl is a beast,” said Mr. Russell. “That is something they should have never tampered with.”

#### **‘He did not want to die’**

Anna, a 31-year-old from Brooklyn, was first introduced to fentanyl three years ago while working in a drug mill in Crown Heights, scooping the chemical mixture into glassine envelopes of heroin.

Soon, straight fentanyl became her drug of choice.

It was powerful — just three baggies replaced her nine daily of heroin — but above all, lab-made fentanyl costs a fraction of the price of natural opiates, which are derived from poppies.

“I knew it was so dangerous,” said Anna, who said she overdosed twice and was revived with Narcan, an anti-overdose medication. She is now in inpatient addiction recovery. “But I didn’t care. It was so cheap.”



When Swainson Brown, 40, a beloved chef at a restaurant on Shelter Island, at the eastern end of Long Island, consumed cocaine on an evening in August, authorities said he had no idea it was laced with fentanyl.

Mr. Brown was among [six people in the community](#) killed in a three-day span by the drug.

“He did not want to die,” said Glenn Petry, Mr. Brown’s friend and employer. “That was without question the farthest thing that he imagined would happen to him that night after using cocaine.”

### Scrambling to keep up

Fentanyl’s rapid spread has caught law enforcement on the back foot.

“Fentanyl had been in the drug supply, but it just wasn’t being detected,” said Major Juan Colón, the former commanding officer of the New Jersey State Police’s Drug Monitoring Initiative. “Once the lab technicians detected heroin, they’d stop there.”

In January 2014, after a seized heroin sample was found to be all fentanyl, Major Colón launched a statewide retrospective look at specimens thought to have been heroin and found that they contained fentanyl.

But years later, crime labs still often lack advanced equipment to test for fentanyl. Three years ago, Suffolk County, where 3,000 people died from overdoses in the last decade, spent \$400,000 on a new mass spectrometer to untangle the crisis.

Complicating factors are fentanyl analogues, the over 1,000 similar chemicals that mimic fentanyl’s behavior, often substituted to avoid detection. The autopsy on Mr. Williams, for example, showed that his body also contained p-fluorofentanyl, one such analogue.

In 2019, under pressure from the Trump administration, [China banned all analogues](#). But the move drove up the volume of raw ingredients — many of which are legal — being shipped in, said Mr. Westhoff, the author of “Fentanyl Inc.”

In September, the Biden administration extended a temporary order to include all fentanyl analogues in the highest classification of illegal drugs, called Schedule 1.

In Suffolk County, Odette R. Hall, the chief medical examiner, is using the new mass spectrometer to dig through deaths, to figure out whether fentanyl or its analogues were to blame — or, she fears, whatever novel drug is coming next.

“Whatever is happening on the street,” Dr. Hall said, “is always going to be a step ahead.”

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HEADLINE	11/19 Rittenhouse verdict: self-defense
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/19/us/rittenhouse-acquittal-self-defense.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/19/us/rittenhouse-acquittal-self-defense.html</a>
GIST	<p>For many Americans, the acquittal of Kyle Rittenhouse on all charges on Friday was a vindication of an innocent, if not heroic, teenager with good intentions. For others, it was a brutal disappointment, further evidence that the courts give white men a pass for their actions.</p> <p>But for legal scholars, it was not a surprise. Once Mr. Rittenhouse claimed that he had acted in self-defense when he shot three men, killing two, during unrest following the police shooting of a Black man in Kenosha, Wis., the onus was on the prosecution to prove otherwise.</p> <p>“When people look at this, and they’re feeling frustrated, they’re not recognizing just how high the prosecutors’ burden is here,” said Cecelia Klingele, a University of Wisconsin law professor. “It was a real uphill battle to get out from under self-defense.”</p>



The acquittal points to the wide berth the legal system gives to defendants who say they acted out of fear, even if others around them were also afraid.

Wisconsin's rules for self-defense are well within the national mainstream. If people reasonably believe they are at risk of death or great bodily harm, they can use deadly force. Most states say that someone who provokes violence or is acting illegally waives the right to self-defense, but Wisconsin allows it if the person has "exhausted every other reasonable means to escape from or otherwise avoid death or great bodily harm."

The state does not have a full-fledged "[stand your ground](#)" statute that exists in [at least 30 states](#), but people who believe they are threatened do not have a duty to retreat if they can.

Such rules can be [combustible](#) when juxtaposed against the state's open carry law, which allows for situations like the one at issue in the trial, where numerous strangers were armed and had taken it upon themselves to maintain order.

Self-defense laws typically do not require someone to have good judgment and tend to consider only the moments leading up to the violence, not whether the person willingly entered a turbulent situation or contributed to the chaos.

"Do you look at the choice to go to a heated, confrontational area with a weapon that would be scary to a lot of people?" said Samuel Buell, a former federal prosecutor who teaches at Duke University School of Law, speaking of Mr. Rittenhouse. "You can't really say that he doesn't have a right to do that because of the status of gun laws."

Similarly, even though the three men on trial for the killing of Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia chased him through a suburban neighborhood, they are claiming self-defense because, they say, Mr. Arbery tried to get control of a shotgun one was carrying.

Gun laws have generally become more permissive — open carry is now legal, to one degree or another, in almost every state. Gun purchases have soared and the Supreme Court appears poised to [gut New York State's handgun permit requirement](#) in a Second Amendment case.

"If we're going to have a country in which guns are pervasive and the law has little or nothing to say about where and when one may carry a gun and display a gun," Mr. Buell said, "then we are going to have a situation where self-defense law can't really handle it."

The reasonable fear standard for self-defense has given rise to concerns that it is affected by the same [racial bias that permeates the justice system](#). A mountain of social science research shows that Black people, men in particular, are more likely to be seen as threatening.

"The message that this case sends is to shoot first, ask questions later," said Kami Chavis, director of the criminal justice program at Wake Forest Law. She added, "If we change the race, the age, the victims, if we change some of these dynamics we very well could have had a different result."

Mr. Rittenhouse went to downtown Kenosha with a military-style assault rifle slung to his chest, saying he wanted to protect property and volunteer as a medic, though he was only 17 years old and not a certified E.M.T.

During the unrest he was pursued by a man, Joseph Rosenbaum, who Mr. Rittenhouse said he feared would wrest control of his gun. Mr. Rittenhouse shot and killed him. That, according to evidence presented at the trial, caused members of the crowd to perceive Mr. Rittenhouse as a dangerous aggressor.

One man, Anthony Huber, used a skateboard as a weapon against him. Mr. Rittenhouse shot and killed him before facing off with a third man, Gaige Grosskreutz, who had pulled out a handgun. Mr. Rittenhouse wounded him in the arm.

Even assuming that everyone involved had the best of intentions, it would be difficult to tell aggressors from defenders. A police officer testified that so many armed people were roving the area that when Mr. Rittenhouse approached with his hands up, he made no connection to the shootings that had occurred.

The jury was not asked to consider whether Mr. Rittenhouse was in error for bringing a gun to a volatile situation. The only gun charge against Mr. Rittenhouse — possession of a dangerous weapon by a person under 18 — [was dismissed at the 11th hour](#). The judge agreed with a defense argument that the law made an exception for long guns, a common provision that allows teenagers to hunt. The law was written at a time when military-style assault rifles were not widely available.

Since the [Parkland, Fla., school shooting](#) in 2018, in which the gunman was 19, Florida, California and Vermont have raised the age to purchase a long gun to 21, and Washington State did the same for semiautomatic rifles.

A [Gallup poll](#) last year showed that support for gun regulation, which surged after the Parkland shooting, has ebbed during the coronavirus pandemic and a spike in violent crime. Still, a healthy majority of Americans support stricter gun laws.

“What happened in Kenosha isn’t some fluke,” said Nick Suplina, senior vice president for Law & Policy at Everytown for Gun Safety. “It’s the logical consequence of state and federal laws being written by the N.R.A. and going unopposed for decades.”

For many who followed the case, especially on the political left, the verdict raised uncomfortable questions about the scope of self-defense laws. Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway of Madison, Wis., called the verdict “deeply disturbing” and expressed concern about the message it sent.

“Unfortunately, this will perpetuate distrust in the justice system and further normalize gun violence,” Ms. Rhodes-Conway said in a statement. “Allowing vigilantism to masquerade as self-defense is a terrible precedent.”

Janine Geske, a former Wisconsin Supreme Court justice who now teaches at Marquette University Law School, said the trial was an instance in which many people’s opinions about what was morally acceptable clashed with the jury’s interpretation of what the law allowed.

“I, too, share that view that had he not brought that gun into Kenosha that day, and just come with his medic bag, we probably would not have had any deaths,” Ms. Geske said.

Ms. Geske said she believed that the jurors could have defensibly reached a guilty verdict. They could have, for example, decided that Mr. Rittenhouse’s fear of death or great bodily harm was not reasonable in the situation.

“It’s hard, because most of the victims at some point were approaching Rittenhouse,” Ms. Geske said. “All those factors made it hard for the jury to be satisfied that it wasn’t a reasonable belief.”

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HEADLINE	11/19 Police chase armed carjackers; escape
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/armed-carjackers-lead-police-multi-county-chase/UR2QDFWEXJGU5CLMKDKUAGEIIM/">https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/armed-carjackers-lead-police-multi-county-chase/UR2QDFWEXJGU5CLMKDKUAGEIIM/</a>
GIST	<p>Three armed carjackers took several vehicles by force while evading police throughout King, Thurston and Pierce counties on Friday.</p> <p>The Washington State Patrol said a person was following a company truck to an area where it was abandoned.</p>

	<p>Officers went to the area, noted as a “known unsafe area.”</p> <p>Three people came out of the place where the truck was abandoned and got into a Cadillac Escalade.</p> <p>As they fled, officers laid down spikes to stop them.</p> <p>The spikes were evaded and they continued onto State Route 18 and State Route 516.</p> <p>The Escalade stopped at the end of the ramp from SR 18 to SR 516, where they carjacked a Ford F150.</p> <p>Officers say the suspects shot through the passenger window of the F150, to force the driver out.</p> <p>The F150 went east on SR 18, driving around Buckley, Enumclaw and Puyallup.</p> <p>As officers tracked the truck on an app, the suspects left King County, went south and ended up on State Routes 410 and 167.</p> <p>They continued on Pacific Highway in Fife, then onto Federal Way.</p> <p>The F150 got onto Interstate 5 South from SR 18, passing other drivers on both shoulders.</p> <p>The vehicle exited towards Nisqually and headed away from the freeway.</p> <p>They abandoned the F150 and carjacked another vehicle, a Silver Nissan Maxima.</p> <p>The suspects went three miles east on Pacific Highway and abandoned the Maxima at Pacific Highway and Reservation Road.</p> <p>The suspects, all armed, fled on foot.</p> <p>The driver is described as a dark-skinned Hispanic man with a full beard and turban; a blue-and-white, button-up short-sleeve shirt; and was armed with a handgun.</p> <p>The second suspect is described as a light-skinned man with prescription glasses and a black hoodie.</p> <p>The third suspect is described as a light-skinned person of unknown gender with long dark hair.</p>
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HEADLINE	<b>11/19 Shoreline PD response pivots after attack</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://komonews.com/news/local/shoreline-police-response-pivots-after-latest-attack-by-man-with-mental-illness">https://komonews.com/news/local/shoreline-police-response-pivots-after-latest-attack-by-man-with-mental-illness</a>
GIST	<p>SHORELINE, Wash. — A home surveillance camera captured the escalating violence posed by a man with mental illness.</p> <p>The latest attack led to the man's arrest Friday, but families who live nearby said police had let the problems go on for too long.</p> <p>“There was no words ahead of time,” said Emily Shuel, who along with her sister was assaulted Tuesday. “It was just so strange.”</p> <p>The pair were walking around the neighborhood when a man rushed up from behind and violently knocked them to the ground. KOMO News is not naming the man.</p> <p>“I didn't even hear him coming up,” Shuel said. “I just felt a push. I heard my neck snap and I was down on the ground.”</p>

Shuel called police and was surprised to learn they did not plan to take the man into custody.

"And they said, 'Oh yes we are aware of this person and there's some mental health issues there' and that's about what we got," Shuel said.

Julie Govantes lives across the street from the man and said he has vandalized her home or car 21 times since February. Govantes said it started out with him breaking her lawn decorations and parts of her fencing, but got worse.

"Then it became throwing rocks from his property across the street to my property," Govantes said, which in one instance shattered a window on her car.

"I don't allow my kids to play in the front yard anymore because you just don't know when he's going to flip," Govantes said.

Govantes and other neighbors kept calling police, but until Friday, officers wouldn't take the man to jail.

The man's father said locking him up won't cure his mental illness.

"He's been current on his treatment but they only recently found out that he has schizophrenia," the father said.

Due to the mental health concerns, investigators said they initially tried to resolve the neighborhood complaints using strategies that did not involve arrest.

King County Sheriff's Sgt. Tim Meyer, the spokesperson for Shoreline Police, said the agency has an evolving approach in cases that involve people in crisis.

"I can completely understand how it appears that we leave a scene and no action was done," Meyer said. "It's often the work that's done after the call that can really be impactful, and that's going to be referral to the prosecutor's office."

The latest assault against Shuel and her sister convinced police the problems were escalating, Meyer said. Investigators then forwarded their evidence to the city prosecutor, who determined that criminal charges were warranted. Meyer said that is why they they changed course and took the man into custody on Friday.

"Crimes against people changes the complexion of the problem and we're going to respond accordingly," Meyer said.

Neighbors said it went on for too long to the point where they didn't feel safe in their own homes. And even with the arrest, they aren't sure what challenges still lie ahead.

"I want what's best for him and I also want what's best for me and I don't think those two things are mutually exclusive," Shuel said. "I think that we can take care of him by getting him some treatment, maybe having him in a facility but that's not something I can do. That's something I need the city to do."

The man is currently being held at SCORE on two counts of assault and two counts of vandalism. It's unclear what kind of behavior health treatment may be pursued.

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HEADLINE	<b>11/19 Federal Way residents worry gun violence</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/federal-way-neighbors-worry-over-rising-gun-violence">https://www.q13fox.com/news/federal-way-neighbors-worry-over-rising-gun-violence</a>
GIST	<b>FEDERAL WAY, Wash.</b> - Gun violence ripped through a <a href="#">Federal Way</a> community for the third week in a row.

This time a 32-year-old man was rushed to a hospital with life-threatening injuries after he was [found shot](#) in the Sunset Three-Twenty apartment complex parking lot.

The crime scene was swarming with detectives for nearly 24 hours. Neighbors called 911 to report gunfire early Friday morning. When cops arrived, they found a shooting victim in the parking lot.

Evidence markers were spread out at the scene, and it appears a black car may have collided with a parked car during the altercation.

"I'm worried for everybody," said Nina Banks.

Investigators say someone nearby watched a person run away shortly after the gunfire. Federal Way police have not made an arrest, and have not shared a description of a suspect.

Friday's shooting was the third in the city in just as many weeks. Last Friday a 45-year-old man was shot and killed on the Calvary Lutheran Church property. In the first week of November, a 13-year-old boy was found dead with a gunshot wound inside a neighborhood park across town.

An October report from the King County Prosecutor revealed there were more than 1,000 reports of gunfire and 73 fatalities just in the third quarter of 2021.

The violence feels spiraling, say some neighbors, who added that Federal Way no longer feels safe to them.

"It's crazy," said Banks, "The violence that's going on."

"Federal Way has become a whole different place to live," said Ronnie Lockett. "It used to be kind of a safe place, now I don't know what's going on."

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HEADLINE	<b>11/19 Portland: Rittenhouse protest declared riot</b>
SOURCE	<a href="https://www.q13fox.com/news/kyle-rittenhouse-protest-police-declare-riot-in-downtown-portland">https://www.q13fox.com/news/kyle-rittenhouse-protest-police-declare-riot-in-downtown-portland</a>
GIST	<p><b>PORTLAND, Ore.</b> - <a href="#">Portland</a> police declared a riot at a demonstration downtown against the acquittal of a teen who killed two people and injured another during a protest in Wisconsin.</p> <p>The protest of about 200 people was declared a riot after protesters started breaking windows, throwing objects at police and talked about burning down the Justice Center, <a href="#">KOIN TV reported</a>.</p> <p>The protesters gathered following the acquittal of Kyle Rittenhouse, 18, in Kenosha, Wisconsin.</p> <p>Portland Police Bureau Chief Chuck Lovell said shortly after the verdict that officers were working on plans for Friday night and the weekend, KOIN reported.</p> <p>By about 8:50 p.m., about 200 protesters had gathered in downtown Portland and blocked streets.</p> <p>By 9 p.m., windows were broken and doors of city facilities were damaged. Police tweeted objects were being thrown at officers in the area., KOIN reported.</p> <p>The police tweeted: "A crowd has gathered near SE 2nd Avenue and SE Madison Street and participants have begun breaking windows and damaging doors of city facilities in the area. People are throwing objects at police officers in the area."</p> <p>Portland saw ongoing, often violent protests after the murder of George Floyd last year by police in Minneapolis. Some activists complained that the police were heavy-handed in their response.</p>

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